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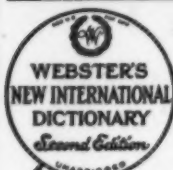
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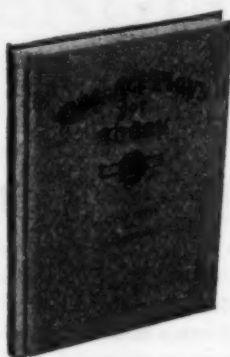
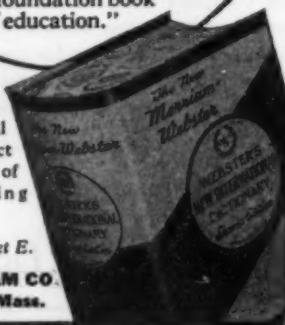
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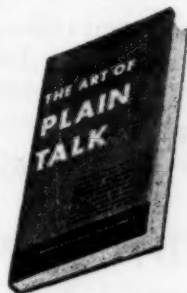
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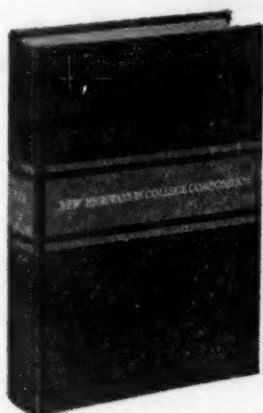
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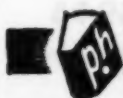
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# COLLEGE ENGLISH

Volume 8

OCTOBER 1946

Number 1

## *Plodding Crusader*

FRANCIS LUDLOW<sup>1</sup>

THE heavy feet of Theodore Dreiser have left deep imprints on the literary sands. Whether he was a giant, an ogre, or merely a crusader afoot, his tracks are here to stay; they will remain when many swifter and surer trails have been obliterated.

Historic significance, however, is not necessarily a proof of greatness. Many a book has become a landmark, not because of its beauty or force, but because of its impact upon its time. There is very little doubt that Dreiser's initial fame was of this almost accidental nature. It resulted from two things: the sentimentality of public taste and one woman's attempt to suppress what seemed to her an outrageous assault upon morality. It is by now an old story that *Sister Carrie*, Dreiser's first novel, was accepted by Doubleday Page and was all ready for publication when Mrs. Doubleday protested with such horror that the book was withdrawn from the market. It was not until seven years later that the book officially appeared, though a few copies were distributed at once. Cries of horror, of course, have always roused the public

from its habitual apathy. *Sister Carrie* became a storm center. It was denounced from the pulpit and in the press. For years Dreiser was linked with the atheist, Ingersoll, as a menace to the nation. Even today his reputation as a wild, wicked writer lingers among people who have never read a word of his books. Yet he was also hailed as the liberator of American letters.

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It is difficult for us to realize how Doubleday, the publisher of *The Memoirs of Hecate County*, could once have blanched at the thought of seeming to condone love out of wedlock. It is even more difficult to understand how so innocuous a novel could have startled the American public. Miss Bobby Sox would find *Sister Carrie* dull—but definitely pallid—after *Captain from Castile* or such widely hailed favorites as *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* and *The Egg and I*.

Dreiser, indeed, was so essentially clean minded as to seem prim to our rough-tongued age. Though *Sister Carrie* is a tale of seduction, it contains none of the scarlet passages almost necessary

<sup>1</sup> Editor of the *Retail Bookseller*.

to contemporary success. Carrie's fall from grace is intimated to the reader with the delicacy of a dewy-eyed Victorian bride knitting tiny garments. Carrie's older sister, Minnie, has a symbolic dream just as Carrie is saying goodbye to Drouet. "Carrie was slipping away somewhere over a rock, and her fingers had let loose and she had seen her falling." Carrie *doesn't* say goodbye to Drouet, and the next day she is living in sin with him as properly as Mary Ann Evans lived with her George. Drouet never so much as kisses Carrie, in print, until months later. Hurstwood, Carrie's second lover, is more demonstrative, but Hurstwood is the dashing type (Dreiser refers to him as "the dressy manager"). Carrie herself remains as cool as a Puritan. "It was not for her," says Dreiser, "to see the well-spring of human passion. A real flame of love is a subtle thing. It burns as a will-o'-the-wisp, dancing onward to fairylands of delight. It roars as a furnace." Not even Mrs. Doubleday could accuse Carrie of roaring as a furnace.

About the nearest Dreiser ever comes to a really roaring furnace is when Cowperwood flings his arm about Aileen (his wife) while she is clad in "a foamy nightgown of white and pink." His seductions occur off-stage, all but the preliminary speeches and kisses. His language is noticeably proper, if not mincing. A woman's breast is always her bust or her bosom. In *The Financier*, he says: "Shall the story of Marjorie be told?" [She was one of Cowperwood's earliest conquests.] "It isn't as innocent as the others. But, no, let it go. There will be more than sufficient without it." Can you imagine a present-day novelist letting it go? In *The Genius* he has this daring speech: "A woman artist is in a d—— of a position anyway," using only the letter *d* to

indicate the word "devil." In later novels Dreiser uses the words "bastard" and "damn" but so rarely that he seems to be attempting merely to follow the vogue.

Today *Sister Carrie* would not cause one raised eyebrow, but in 1900 it was a bomb. In 1900 Americans were reading *Alice of Old Vincennes* (the most popular book of the year), *To Have and To Hold*, and *David Harum*. Stephen Crane's *Maggie* had been published in America and Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* in England, but in the books that the public read virtue was still triumphant. Dreiser had said nothing new or especially iconoclastic, but he had said it at just the right time to disturb one woman and through her a nation. Butler's *The Way of All Flesh* and Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* had much the same sort of impact upon their times, whereas now they would be accepted with equanimity.

However lightly we take literary adultery today, it was not taken lightly in the romances of 1900. Undoubtedly other writers of Dreiser's time, far cleverer than he, knew that sin was not always as red as it was painted, but they skipped blithely over or around the popular prejudices. Dreiser trudged right through them. He felt that sin was often an accident of circumstances, and said so. He wasn't even entirely convinced that love without benefit of clergy *was* a sin—and said so. In *Jennie Gerhardt* he wrote: "No process is vile, no condition is unnatural. The accidental variation from a given social practice does not necessarily entail sin." It was for this obstinate honesty that critics spoke of "the murky world of Theodore Dreiser" and bewailed his preoccupation with ugliness and sex. They had no more effect upon him than a swarm of flies about an elephant's ears.

Dreiser had none of the minor virtues

of the novelist. He was a clumsy writer, an inept craftsman. Often his characters were as lifeless as zombies. He loved to harangue his readers, to parade philosophical reflections which he apparently regarded as his own rather wonderful discoveries. The harder he tried to decorate his style, the worse it became. Whenever, as in the first part of *An American Tragedy*, he endeavored to write with flourishes, he grew sententious, banal, sometimes downright ridiculous. When, on the other hand, he forgot to be literary, he wrote simply and directly. In conversation, particularly, he could achieve surprising life.

He was, of course, self-taught, but even before he wrote his novels he had been a newspaper reporter and a magazine editor. He should at least have been able to construct and punctuate sentences. But he put commas where they didn't belong (which might almost be called an occupational disease of authors). His grammar would cause a schoolboy some disquiet. He used dangling participles, almost habitually said "could not help but," used "infer" for "imply," and every so often used a singular subject with a plural predicate. He had a wistful way of dragging in rare words like "fulgurous," "imbibation," and "staccatically," and all too frequently used them incorrectly. He attempted purple passages and left his readers with a dark brown taste. He contradicted the sense of one phrase by the sense of another. He talked of "innate instincts." How, for instance, could anyone with an ear write, "Most of them did not live at home as he did, or if they did like Ratterer, they had parents who didn't mind what they did." Or, "Neither could tolerate the socialistic theory relative to capitalistic exploitation." Or,

"She invited Eugene to make a four with her, but not knowing how he refused."

In *An American Tragedy* there appears this characteristic sentence:

For in spite of the fact that thus far Clyde had never openly agreed with himself that his intentions in relation to Roberta were in any way different to those normally entertained by any youth toward any girl for whom he had a conventional social regard, still, now that she had moved into this room, there was that ineradicable and possibly censurable, yet very human and almost inescapable, desire for something more—the possibility of greater and greater intimacy with and control of Roberta and her thoughts and actions in everything so that in the end she would be entirely his.

What a way of saying that, once Roberta had taken a room by herself, Clyde began to play with the idea of profiting by the opportunity.

Here is a bit of philosophy from *The Titan*:

The world is dosed with too much religion. Life is to be learned from life, and the professional moralist is at best but a manufacturer of shoddy wages. At the ultimate remove, God or the life force, if anything, is an equation, and at its nearest expression for man—the contract social—it is that also. Its method of expression appears to be that of generating the individual, in all its glittering variety and scope, and through him progressing to the mass with its problems. In the end a balance is invariably struck wherein the mass subdues the individual or the individual the mass—for the time being. For, behold, the sea is ever dancing or raging. . . . Nirvana! Nirvana! The ultimate, still, equation.

These are not unfair examples: Dreiser's novels are full of such things as "several daughters, two at least"; "she was of a pale, emasculate and unimportant structure"; "a nerve plasm palpitation that spoke loudly"; "'Do I?' smiled Clyde simply and courageously and very much flattered by the comparison"; "Young Cowperwood's father was a bank clerk at his birth"; "He was a man of his

own age, but a much more forceful character."

In one of his tense moments (and he had many of them), Eugene Witla, hero of *The Genius*, mutters, "Mine, mine, mine!" Dreiser himself remarks that "one would have thought him a villain in a cheap melodrama." Witla is full of such bombast as "Curse the brooding fates that could thus plot to destroy him"—which, in Witla's case, probably meant that he had run into some difficulty in his latest love affair. "Oh, the mockery of it," he exclaims. He "cut his palms with his nails," a trick which seems impossible to creatures of common clay (glamour girls with their ten lethal weapons are not included).

Hurstwood, of *Sister Carrie*, bursts out, "Ah, the agony of it."

And yet, in that same *Sister Carrie*, Drouet, when he finds that Carrie has left him, says with poignant realism, "You didn't do me right, Cad." Mr. Watson, in *Jennie Gerhardt*, comments, "A man with a little money is just like a cat with a bell around its neck. Every rat knows exactly where it is and what it is doing." In the same book Lester Kane describes his brother Robert thus: "He's got a Scotch Presbyterian conscience mixed with an Asiatic perception of the main chance." In *The Financier* there is this succinct summary of the hero's father:

Mr. Henry Worthington Cowperwood was at this time a significant figure—tall, lean, inquisitorial, clerkly, the pink of perfection in the niceties of commercial conduct, absolutely practical—a man who believed only what he saw, was not at all disturbed about those silly fancies which might trouble the less rational brains of this world, and content to be what he was—a banker, or prospective one. He looked upon life as a business situation, or deal, with everybody born as more or less capable machines to take part in it.

Dreiser *could* write effectively, though he didn't do it very often.

Further, upon occasion Dreiser rose to poetic heights. In *The Titan*, he paints this picture of Chicago:

This singing flame of a city, this all America, this poet in chaps and buckskin, this rude, raw Titan, this Burns of a city! By its shimmering lake it lay, a king of shreds and patches, a maundering yokel with an epic in its mouth, a tramp, a hobo among cities, with the grip of Caesar in its mind, the dramatic force of Euripides in its soul. A very bard of a city this, singing of high deeds and high hopes, its heavy brogans buried deep in the mire of circumstance. Take Athens, oh, Greece! Italy, do you keep Rome! This was the Babylon, the Troy, the Nineveh of a younger day. Here came the gaping West and the hopeful East to see. Here hungry men, raw from the shops and fields, idyls and romances in their minds, builded them an empire crying glory in the mud.

Compare this passage with Carl Sandburg's "Chicago," published in the same year. You'll find that Dreiser's color and poetic imagery are as great as Sandburg's, even though they are not so deftly handled.

In constructing his novels, Dreiser used much the same method that he used in constructing his sentences. He simply plodded straight ahead. It was not for him to select, to sift, to present only the most significant and dramatic scenes. He started at the beginning and went right through to the end, no matter how long it took. When one of his heroes got a job, he named the employer, described the job, and probably explained just how the employer came to be doing whatever it was, and sketched his early life. He always gave street numbers. He apparently enjoyed clothing with the naïve enthusiasm of a rural subscriber reading about the bride's going-away costume. His taste was for the ornate. He remarks that the Cowperwoods rented a little house in Chicago. "Fortunately it was



furnished in good taste," a prominent evidence of this taste being "a grand piano finished in pink and gold." We can forgive him for this love of show, however, because we know he grew up in poverty and had to struggle desperately, for a time, for food and clothing. He had the poor boy's half-envious admiration of fine clothes, of arrogance, of wealth and its appurtenances—even though he had no real desire for luxury and didn't know what to do with it when he had achieved it. It is Dreiser's lack of self-confidence (socially, that is; he never doubted his own aesthetic convictions) that explains his adulation of such men as Hurstwood, Eugene Witla, and Frank Cowperwood. All three were eminently successful, at least for a time. All three won popular acclaim and feminine love. And all three have a specious glitter; they are not quite believable. Hurstwood is a shrewd businessman who steals money, is frightened into giving it back, and eventually commits suicide after begging for a living. He is the *bon vivant*, the clubman, the good fellow. At times he becomes lifelike and moving, but there is always a hint of the artificial about him. The things he does are convincing, but much of the time he does them puppet fashion. Eugene Witla is given to us as an artistic genius, witty, humorous, and charming. But he acts, throughout his story, like a spoiled boy. He is petulant, vain, selfish. He postures and rants. One moment he brags about his strength, and the next he is indulging in an orgy of self-pity. It is hard to imagine so weak and silly a man as a great painter, a dynamic painter. It is harder to imagine him as a wit or a humorist. We must take Dreiser's word for it, because he never says anything witty or humorous. How could he? Dreiser himself was too serious for

humor, too ponderous for wit. Frank Cowperwood is the most credible of these lordlings, but he is not the most admirable. In *The Financier* he plays the market with the money of the state of Pennsylvania; in *The Titan* he takes over the city of Chicago, loses it, but sets out for Europe as an elderly philanderer, with most of his millions and a beautiful girl. At least he never whined or felt sorry for himself.

Dreiser has a way of telling us what happened instead of letting us see it happen, which perhaps accounts for the occasional woodenness of some of his characters. This indirect presentation is especially noticeable in *The Bulwark*, his last novel; at times it seems to be an outline for a novel rather than the novel itself. It is undeniable that, as his stories become more exciting, he is carried away by the movement of events and lets his people speak and act for themselves. The most effective scenes in his novels are the difficult scenes, the big scenes in which a slip might be disastrous: Hurstwood's elopement with Carrie and his gradual degradation after she leaves him; Cowperwood's losing fight for Chicago; Lester Kane's death; Clyde Griffiths' capture and his subsequent trial. Dreiser, the self-conscious author, indulged in bathos and bad writing, but Dreiser, the story-teller, could reproduce conversations with fidelity—even the "tones of voice" to which he sometimes seemed totally deaf—and could build up an incident with imagination and power.

He was a story-teller. His books, after many years, are in so much demand as to be nearly unobtainable. Thousands of people read his books, and most people read them because they are good stories. He tells with microscopic accuracy of financial transactions, of love affairs, of murder, of getting a job and earning a



living. His knowledge is extraordinary—and extraordinarily convincing. We believe what he tells us about politics, business, the everyday trials of life. He piles incident upon incident until even the carping reader finds himself absorbed in what is happening. We may find fault with the mechanics of what we read, but we read.

He lacked the minor graces of the novelist, but he was rich in the qualities that make for greatness. When he wrote about the lordlings, whom he did not understand, he was inclined to verge upon nonsense, though even then he managed to contrive scenes of real power. But it was in writing about the lowly, the sinful, the people with too heavy a burden, that he transcended style and structure. To Dreiser there were no villains. Carrie, the empty-headed little working girl, and Drouet and Hurstwood, her seducers, are presented without condemnation. The selfish and silly libertine, Witla, and Cowperwood, the lawless financial gangster, are treated sympathetically. Even the betrayer and murderer, Clyde Griffiths, wins our reluctant pity. As for William Gerhardt and Jennie, they are actually likable. Jennie, the light-of-love, is the warmest-hearted character in Dreiser's books, and the most lovable. Even her stern German father says, as he lies dying, "You're a good woman." Again and again Dreiser stresses that "virtue is the wishing well and the doing well unto others. Virtue is that quality of generosity which offers itself willingly for another's service." Solon Barnes, the old Quaker of *The Bulwark*, declares, "God has taught me humility—and, in his loving charity, awakened me to many things that I had not seen before. One is the need of love toward all created things."

Dreiser could be savage with the

meaner transgressions—hypocrisy, stinginess, malice, slander. Meagerness of spirit, he seemed to believe, was the fault of the individual, and he had no patience with it. But the larger sins he blamed on "the vast skepticism and apathy of life." When Etta Barnes wept after her father's death, her brother reproached her. "Oh, I am not crying for myself, or for Father," said Etta. "I am crying for life." Solon, who had lived by the tenets of the Quaker religion, came at last to say of his two wayward children, "I have erred. Yes, yes, I must have. Perhaps I have not understood—perhaps I have been too hard."

It is this refusal to condemn, this understanding and sympathy, that is Dreiser's finest quality. In *An American Tragedy* he wins our forgiveness for Clyde, not by excuses or extenuation, but by letting us see into Clyde's soul—his wistful dreams, his weakness, his hungers, his vanity, his fears. He does not make Clyde's crime less (our feeling for the forsaken and drowned Roberta is almost unbearable), but he makes us, for a time at least, think and feel with Clyde. We understand what he has done because it is as if we had done it ourselves. We hesitate with him, wonder with him, long with him for the happier world of wealth and position, and draw back with him in fright from the thought of murder, only to edge timidly toward it again. We know, with Clyde, that nothing can undo murder—no matter how long we live, it will be a blackness in our minds and a trembling in our body. We cry out with him against being taken, a prisoner, before his friends, as he meets death more bravely than shame. *An American Tragedy* is the most poignant of Dreiser's books, as *Jennie Gerhardt* is the tenderest.

It is not only the chief characters who

are so real (when they are real at all): Clyde's mother, Jennie Gerhardt's father, Drouet, even Aileen of the red-gold hair—all at one time or another become alive and, virtually, ourselves. We work and hope and love with them and strive against the tragic pitfalls of life.

Isn't this the most important ability

of the novelist, to make us identify ourselves with his characters?

At his worst, Dreiser was an honest, if blundering, story-teller; at his best, he approached the infinite compassion and emotional drive called genius. If he was not a great novelist, he was certainly a great man.

## *Two Formulas for Fiction*

*Henry James and H. G. Wells*

E. K. BROWN<sup>1</sup>

### I

CONFESSEDLY a victim of war-nerves, H. G. Wells, in 1915, brought out a curious work, *Boon, The Mind of the Race, The Wild Asses of the Devil, and The Last Trump, Being a first selection from the literary remains of George Boon, Appropriate to the Time, Prepared for Publication by Reginald Bliss, with an Ambiguous Introduction by H. G. Wells*. Copyright was taken out by Reginald Bliss, but I do not suppose a single reader was duped. In every image, in every rhythm (except where there is parody), the presence of H. G. Wells is asserted. The fifth chapter is entitled "Of Art, of Literature, of Mr. Henry James." Here is a garland of the compliments tossed at James: "He has no penetration. He is the culmination of the superficial type. . . . James's selection becomes just omission and nothing more. . . . It's like cleaning rabbits for the table. . . . James's denatured peo-

ple are only the equivalent in fiction of those egg-faced black-haired ladies, who sit and sit in the Japanese colour prints, the unresisting stuff for an arrangement of blacks. . . . It is like a church lit but without a congregation to distract you, with every light and line focused on the high altar. And on the altar very reverently placed, intensely there, is a dead kitten, an egg-shell, a bit of string. . . . His vast paragraphs sweat and struggle; they could not sweat and elbow and struggle more if God Himself was the processional meaning to which they sought to come. And all for tales of nothingness. . . . It is leviathan retrieving pebbles. It is a magnificent but painful hippopotamus resolved at any cost, even at the cost of its dignity, upon picking up a pea which has got into a corner of its den." To the reader of Wells's autobiography it is no surprise to hear that James "bothered" him, that he believed that there was not enough space, even in the roomy vehicle of the English novel, for James's idea of what a novel should be and for his own. One must be expelled.

What, in his view, was so wrong in the

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Jamesian formula? The difference was not merely one of substance; it was no less one of form. In substance what Wells deplored was the multitude of omissions. "In all James's novels you will find no people with religious opinions, none with clear partisanship or with lusts or whims." One is reminded of Bernard Shaw's observation (to a young student of James's plays, asking him why they had failed to seize upon the feelings of the audience) that James was an atheist of the old school. If you add to the word "atheist" (or better "agnostic") such terms as apolitical and bloodless and over-unified, you have the Wellsian conception of the personages of Henry James. These over-unified, bloodless, apolitical agnostics are, moreover, approached by their creator in a fashion that displeases Wells as much as their existence. "He wants a novel to be simply and completely *done*. He wants it to have a unity, he demands homogeneity. . . . Why *should* a book have that? For a picture it's reasonable, because you have to see it all at once. But there's no need to see a book all at once. It's like wanting a whole county done in one style and period of architecture." Over against the Jamesian ideal of a flawless pattern he sets one which harks back to the tumultuous confusion of mid-Victorian fiction: "If the novel is to follow life it must be various and discursive. Life is diversity and entertainment, not completeness and satisfaction. All actions are half-hearted, shot delightfully with wandering thoughts—about something else. All true stories are a felt of irrelevances." Wells was asking for the novel of Dickens, exclaiming against the novel of Flaubert: This so modern-minded man was nostalgic for an art form that was threatened both by the naturalists and by the symbolists and

most of all by the zealots for technique, Henry James and Joseph Conrad.

Wells and James had been on terms of friendly acquaintance for about twenty years when *Boon* came out. It had been Wells's habit to send James his books as they appeared; and it had been James's habit to indicate briefly, clearly, and graciously that his idea of the novel was quite another one, and to expatiate almost purringly on the excellences of the Wellsian kind of fiction. "My world is, somehow, other," he says of *Love and Mr. Lewisham* (1900), but "I am under the charm" of yours. *A Modern Utopia* (1905) drew from James the magnificent compliment: "You are, for me, more than ever the most interesting 'literary man' of your generation—in fact the only interesting one." Similar praise, heartfelt, elaborate, endearing, came when James had his inscribed copies of *Marriage* (1912) and *The Passionate Friends* (1913). In 1914, however, James set out, in a very long essay, to survey what he called "the new novel," and the work of Wells came in for extended comment. To anyone who bears in mind that James was over seventy when he wrote this study and that the novelists whom he chiefly discussed were in no sense his disciples, what is notable is the earnest desire of his generous spirit to see virtue in their formulas and to do homage to the spell which they could lay on his imagination. Still, writing not to a friendly acquaintance but for the public eye, James was careful to mark his difference from the authors he discussed and to defend, sometimes rather directly, sometimes by implication, his own practice of fifty years. Wells can charm us, he says, by the admirable way in which so easily he handles the immense mass of his knowledge, a knowledge greater than any novelist before him had had, except

perhaps Balzac. He can charm us by the spectacle of his own rich, full mind, which he turns out for us "by any free familiar gesture, and as from a high window forever open." But still his is so wasteful a method—James's milder and rather quaint phrase is "so fondly neglected a state of leakage"—that the delicate critical discernment of James, as well as his fine sensibility, is wounded at the sight of such costly treasure so ill arranged. Had James come right out with his objections, they would have run about as follows: "Wells does not objectify and does not shape; his personages are less alive than the personality of the author which suffuses them all and, indeed, the whole novel; the material is flung together helter-skelter, the parts being far more vivid, far more interesting, far more fully *done*, than the whole."

Such was the utterance on James's part that exploded the firecrackers and bombs in *Boon*. When James read that work, he was appalled. The old man begins sadly: "It is difficult, of course, for a writer to put himself *fully* in the place of another writer who finds him extraordinarily futile and void and who is moved to publish that to the world." The manners of Wells, the immense cheekiness which James in an earlier letter had extolled, were as painful as the evidence of his distance from James's imagination. But James grew in courage as the letter continued: "The fact," he says, "that a mind as brilliant as yours *can* resolve me into such an unmitigated mistake, can't enjoy me in anything like the degree in which I like to think I may be enjoyed, makes me greatly want to fix myself, for as long as my nerves will stand it, with such a pair of eyes." Briefly he insists that his world, lacking certain kinds of life and certain sorts of fulness, is not an empty world and that,

to its fulness and life, the fashioning of it by his special kinds of technique is essential.

We have in the *Experiment in Autobiography* only a fragment of Wells's reply, in which, as a justification of his harshness, he alleges that the Jamesian conception of fiction was "altogether too prominent in the world of criticism"; but he repents of the bad grace with which he had expressed his mind. I think that the only way in which these two remarks can be reconciled is by saying that Wells had become sorry he had had to say what he did but continued to be sure he had had to say it, sorry because he was stabbing a friend but, having to stab him because the present state of civilization and of the novel, so powerful an influence upon it, required it. That James did not find the explanation adequate his second letter, next to the final document in the controversy, shows. The notion that he and what he stood for dominated any part of the world of letters was one he could not take seriously: he knew how meager the sales of his novels were, and, though he did not say so in writing to Wells, he poured out his sense of failure in letters of that same year addressed to more sympathetic correspondents. Firmly he returned the controversy to its essential issue: whether his fiction had life and fulness. That Wells's fiction had both he did not call in question. The source of fiction, he says, is "the sincere and shifting experience of the individual practitioner"; and he himself, he was sure, was rich in experience. "Of course," he says, in what I take to be one of the most significant sentences he ever wrote, "for myself I live, live intensely, and am fed by life, and my value, whatever it be, is in my own kind of expression of that." He accepts the challenge: he asserts that in the article in which Wells found him



lacking he was, in his own considered view, adequate. He then carries the attack. Is it not, he inquires, a test of his receptivity to experience that he can do what Wells cannot do—enter happily and gratefully into the fictional world of another's creation, into the world of Wells's own fiction? It is, he says, precisely when a novelist's experience in life is radically unlike his own that he finds him most rewarding, for from such a novelist he can derive "the extension of life, which is the novel's best gift."

We are left with two questions unanswered: first, just what was the nature of the life and fulness that James's fiction expressed? and, second, was it true that the author of that fiction was a man of large, liberal, and eager curiosity? The questions are closely connected and may best be considered together.

## II

The first of them must now concern us. We need not make the hopeless attempt to pass in review all the fiction of James—short stories, *nouvelles*, and three-volume novels. We have only to take it at its best. James's fiction may be fairly judged by *The Portrait of a Lady*, a relatively early work, but always a favorite of the author. What, then, was the nature of the life and fulness in the *Portrait*?

Isabel Archer, the lady portrayed, was one of James's happiest imaginations. She first comes before us a vivid eager girl, deeply and obviously American, afire with the desire for experience, taut against an environment which is for her insufferably narrow and rigid and uninteresting, a small city in upper New York State. We see her responding first to England, then to Paris, and then to Italy, coming into association with types of increasing depth and complexity and

strangeness until, in her marriage with that evil American cosmopolite, Gilbert Osmond, she is brought to smell the very fires of hell. That is the formula of the book, and as a formula it offers the promise of life and fulness: There is contrast and development; there is variety and concentration.

How does James clothe his formula? One of the experiences he devises for Isabel Archer is England; and we may discover a good deal about James by noting what he thought it necessary to introduce if his heroine were to experience England. It is clear that he felt natural beauty was necessary; perhaps criticism has made too little of James's sensitiveness to nature, of his impressionist skill in making nature tell on us. I do not readily recall any picture of the grounds of an English country-house more charming or more vivid than James's opening chapter; and the house itself is evoked with a selective accuracy, a tenderness and warmth that are above praise. To this house Isabel will come as almost an inmate, as the protégée of her aunt, Mrs. Touchett. In this setting James introduces the man who will represent English character to Isabel, the man who will love her, and fail to get her, and proffer good offices to her during the whole period of the book. This is Lord Warburton. Mark his introduction: ". . . a noticeably handsome face, fresh-coloured, fair, and frank, with firm straight features, a lively grey eye, and the rich adornment [a period touch!] of a chestnut beard. This person had a certain fortunate brilliant exceptional look, the air of a happy temperament fertilised by a high civilization—which would have made almost any observer envy him at a venture." Warburton is not apolitical. He reproaches Isabel with being "grossly superstitious." Ameri-



cans, he had found, "were rank Tories and bigots, every one of them; there were no conservatives like American conservatives. Her uncle and her cousin were there to prove it; nothing could be more medieval than many of their views." Her cousin Ralph regrets Warburton's radicalism as an unhappy trait in a man whose position is so much at variance with his views that they require him to condemn his position as an "abuse." By singling out Lord Warburton as the principal representative of English life, James is intent upon emphasizing that in English life which is least easily reproducible in America, the grace and force of a powerful aristocracy which has made use of privilege to establish certain patterns of thought and feeling and conduct.

It is true that an English lord in a Wells novel would be a very different sort of figure. In *Tono-Bungay*, Wells wishes to show how the Honourable Beatrice Normanby has a ruined life because, in deference to English class stratification, she marries not the hero, that mercurial inventor from the servants' quarters, but the evil loungeur, Lord Carnaby. No doubt Wells was impatient to find that the only lord in the *Portrait* was so delightful a figure as Warburton; but if he could be brought to admit that the pattern of the book required that Isabel's experience of England should find that country both at its least American and at its best, I think he would admit that Warburton was the sort of figure who would most fully serve the pattern. Beatrice became Lord Carnaby's mistress; but Warburton is not quite good enough to be Isabel's husband. Wells would, however, wish that, in the account of Warburton's world, something should be done to make sure that we did not suppose it to be a sound world, something that would lead us to

say that it is founded on certain assumptions about the nature of society which have been out of date for centuries, something that would lead us to reflect that it was no longer wholly real. All of that, I would urge, James has done, though he has not done it in Wells's manner. Let us return to *Tono-Bungay*. In that book, to explain all that goes wrong, Wells has one constant factor: what he calls, from the name of the first country-house he presents, "Bladesoverery." If London is a city inconvenient for living, that is because of Bladesoverery; if the hero's uncle fails as a druggist in a sleepy southeastern town, that is because of Bladesoverery; if Beatrice is corrupted and the hero frustrated, that is Bladesoverery once more. The whole sham-Napoleonic career of Teddy Ponderevo is one series of tantrums and whirlings and plungings inspired in his wild and foolish nature by the pressure upon him of the indifference and superciliousness of the great lords, the lordlings, and their hangers-on; every few pages Wells pauses to tell us that this is so and that Bladesoverery should be rooted out and England made into a really modern society. That is Wells's way, and a very spirited, unfailingly interesting way it is. James's way is finer, more economical, just as definite, and, above all, it is essentially a novelist's way. When Isabel perceives that Lord Warburton is on the verge of a proposal, her imagination constructs for her a picture of life as Lady Warburton. "A girl might do much worse than trust herself to such a man as Lord Warburton, and it would be very interesting to see something of his system from his own point of view; on the other hand, however, there was evidently a great deal of it which she should regard only as an incumbrance, and even in the whole there was something heavy and

rigid which would make it unacceptable." The promise of life as Lady Warburton is not rich enough to satisfy Isabel Archer. She refuses to be Lady Warburton. This is what the plot of the *Portrait* involves, and the judgment on the aristocracy of England, taken at its best, is regretfully, a little wistfully, but quite definitely a condemnation.

The remainder of the novel is set in the international scene, among Americans who make a vocation of living abroad. For his constant preoccupation with the theme of the American abroad James has incurred much criticism and some contempt. In the *Portrait* there is depth, vigor, and even horror in the treatment of the theme; and it appears to me that a book which achieves such qualities as these justifies its theme easily. Italy, we are told, is not in the book, nor France, except as landscapes and architecture. Gilbert Osmond's sister is married to an Italian count, but we do not meet him. American society in Europe from Ned Rosier, the child-like connoisseur and Pansy Osmond, the perfect *jeune fille* of Latin Europe, through the Countess Gemini, the scatterbrained adulteress, and Mrs. Touchett, the elderly American who has a wry sort of liking for Europe along with a prejudice against Europeans, to Madame Merle and Gilbert Osmond, deep, evil, and distinguished expatriates—this whole society is as living as a group of Americans set down in New York or Boston. It exists as a society; it is not merely a congeries of individuals who have resolved against living in the United States; and, because it is a society, the individual relationships within it do not have the air of meetings in a void. To return to one of Wells's images, these are not people who have been cleaned like rabbits for the table. The

things that befall them befall flesh and blood in its natural, living state.

The society in which they live is not a mere vagrant cosmopolitanism such as marks the habitués of the Parisian hotel *Nouveau-Luxe* in Mrs. Wharton's *The Custom of the Country*. The civilization of the country in which they live is a large factor in their conduct. Italy is not in the book except as landscape and architecture, it was said, and in the obvious sense this is so—there is no expression of Italian society in it such as those other Jamesian beings, Casamassima or Prince Amerigo. But in another and more important sense Italy is essential to the book: living in Italy, not merely as a place of exquisite landscape, incomparable architecture, and all kinds of material beauty but as a distinct form of human society, reshaped the character of Gilbert Osmond. Before Isabel has her future, before she can count as a possible *parti* for Osmond, Madame Merle speaks of him to her candidly and devastatingly: she begins by condemning the expatriate life in general terms—"If we are not good Americans, we are certainly poor Europeans; we have no natural place here; we are mere parasites, crawling over the surface; we haven't our feet in the soil"; then she raises the case of Osmond—"He is Gilbert Osmond; he lives in Italy; that is all one can say about him; . . . no career, no name, no position, no fortune, no past, no future, no anything." It is because of the emptiness of his social connection but even more because of his modeling himself, in abstraction, upon elements of Italian character that he becomes a monstrous being. Macchiavelli, we learn, is among his principal models; and, living for years in Rome, he had a fancy to be pope because papal power on its plane has no

limit. It is clear, without adding detail, that Gilbert Osmond is what he is in large measure because Italy had been the scene of his life: Gilbert Osmond reared in Brooklyn or Kansas City would have been a radically different being. If this is so, then Italy as a society is a significant factor in the novel, even though no Italians linger upon the stage.

How much befalls the characters? George Moore has complained that the personages in the novels of James seem to him like people who pace up and down, up and down on the terraces of a country-house, debating endlessly whether they might offer one another cigarettes. His personages are often to be found at country-houses, and they are a deliberative tribe; but the matters they deliberate are not quite so innocent. The center of the *Portrait* is full of horror. Thirteen years or so before the novel opens, Gilbert Osmond had a child by Madame Merle; their intimacy was long drawn out, but its warmth was gone before the time of the novel. Osmond has kept the child. The liaison has been beautifully concealed, and they are free to see each other in the society of their friends. The long strain of deception has turned both of them, and particularly the woman, into anxious beings, beautiful on the surface, putrid at the core. Madame Merle resolves that Isabel Archer's fortune should be possessed by Osmond and thus come to the help of her daughter who, unprovided with a decent dowry, is approaching the age when marriage will be thought of. Knowing as no one else in the world does that around Gilbert Osmond, when he is really known, there is the smell of the fires of hell, she yet makes this marriage between Isabel and Osmond. And the course of the marriage is as fearful as

one can conceive. I think that a great deal befalls the heroine, a great deal that is strange and complex and fearful.

Is there any color to the charge that James is limited in the way in which he draws the situation? From our present expectations there is one obvious limit. The quality of the sexual relation between Osmond and Isabel is simply left out. We are told that she had one child and that it died. I think that is the only reference, and it is very oblique and faint. Treated by Wells, by Hardy, even by Meredith, the sexual relation would have been far more constantly present to our minds. In defense of James (and that this is but a partial defense I appreciate) it must be said that Osmond is horrible to him, as to us, through quite other than sexual qualities. What James wishes to do with Osmond is to demonstrate the destruction of a nature with fine qualities by a mad pride, a mad need to be absolute in power. Isabel must lose every atom of her individual nature if he is to be content; she must become no more than a smooth surface on which he may inscribe what he wills. This she in her force and exuberance can never be; and he comes to hate her. He hates her because she is a limit to the demonstration of his power. All this, which might have been crazily melodramatic, James makes purely human; he incarnates the extremes with perfect probability. The sexual aspect of Osmond was unnecessary to the portrait of his character, though to include it would have been to enrich the portrait.

If one will grant the exclusion of the sexual part of her horrible drama (it is fair, I think, in historical terms, to recall the date of the novel and then to remember how Thackeray and George Eliot felt constrained to similar exclusions—how

slight, for example, is the treatment of this in the Dorothea-Casaubon relation in *Middlemarch*, where, nevertheless, it must have had its importance) and also the deliberate way in which James organizes his material and expresses himself, I think this is all one needs to grant against the book as a portrait of a character intensely alive and tragically moving. Pelham Edgar reproves James for leaving Isabel in a wearing situation from which she finds no issue that her character will permit her to take. "She has wilfully followed her unsupported judgment in choosing her husband and she is equally wilful now [i.e., at the close] in her determination to accept the consequences." This is accurate, though "wilful" seems too slight a word for all the passion and all the pain and all the force that are in Isabel. "We are cheated," Mr. Edgar goes on, in a line of argument that echoes Matthew Arnold in the Preface of 1853, "of our desire to see an abundant nature expand, and we are not permitted to witness in exchange for this extinguished hope her recovery of strength through suffering." Again the substance of Edgar's statement is accurate, and again there is a word that impels dissent. Are we "cheated"? The abundant nature does not expand; but a picture of such a nature caught in a vise and bravely, quiveringly, resolving to remain there can be no less stirring, no less satisfying to the feelings, than the alternatives Edgar defines. The portrait of Isabel is a magnificently living and moving portrait and is one of the strongest answers to the objections Wells advanced to the world of James's fiction.

Not only in the realization of character but just as much in the realization of scene is the *Portrait* admirable. It is studded with scenes where the action, speech, and thought of the personages

are packed with life. There are the scenes between Ralph Touchett and his father, breathing an affection mixed with fatigue and sadness—among the most quietly and surely real father-and-son scenes in modern fiction. There are the Countess Gemini scenes, all striking the same living note of nervous explosive candor. Above all, there are the scenes in which Madame Merle has a part. The portrait of Madame Merle is scarcely less wonderful than that which gives the novel its name. About her James has developed, somewhat as he was to do so often in his later novels, a great deal of atmosphere.

To atmosphere he was highly sensitive. He counts among the greatest powers of Browning that his poems press upon us, especially his Italian poems, enveloping us in a dense atmosphere, "that breath of Browning's own particular matchless Italy which takes us full in the face and remains from the first the felt rich coloured air in which we live." In his generous, perhaps overgenerous, tribute to Mrs. Wharton's most Jamesian novel, *The Reef*, it is the atmosphere of which he speaks most feelingly: "A vague and elegant French colonnade or gallery, with a French river dimly gleaming through as the harmonious *fond* . . . in the key of this you have kept the whole thing." An atmosphere insufficiently dense would mar his pleasure; it was partly because Hawthorne is so admirably atmospheric that James set him above all other American writers; it was partly because American writers diffused so thin an atmosphere about their work that they usually left James dissatisfied and querulous.

How, then, we may inquire, does he diffuse so rich an atmosphere about Madame Merle? What are his instruments? The first scene in which she appears supplies an almost complete an-



swer. James has told us that Isabel's first contact with Madame Merle is one of the two supreme moments of the book. "Isabel," he writes, "coming into the drawing-room at Gardencourt, coming in from a wet walk, or whatever, that rainy afternoon, finds Madame Merle in possession of the place, Madame Merle seated all absorbed but all serene, at the piano, and deeply recognizes in the striking of such an hour, in the presence there among the gathering shades, of this personage, of whom a moment before she had never so much as heard, a turning point of her life." In this single sentence James suggests a number of the elements that compose his atmosphere; there is the grim, rainy weather, the gathering twilight, and there is the quiet assertion of power, the note of possession, in Madame Merle, and there is, subtlest of all, the inexplicable feeling in Isabel that this quiet moment is for her a great moment or, at least, a prelude to many great moments. This is an admirable instance of that almost unmatched "fineness of consciousness" in which Mr. F. O. Matthiessen discovers the peculiar value of James's fiction. There are other elements which are either unmentioned or unstressed in James's preface: there is Madame Merle's mastery of the piano; there is her large frame beautifully rounded and most elegantly clad, her large firm hands, her voice and the exquisite civilization both in its tones and in the ideas and phrases for which it is the vehicle. It is easy to lay one's finger on all these elements, but I do not think that, in the aggregate, they explain the peculiar force of the moment for Isabel and for the reader. Practically everything that is said of Madame Merle in the scene, and quite everything that she says, are in her favor; but I do not think she wins us. For Isabel, she provides an

experience beyond the girl's previous range; and it is, if exciting, a vaguely uncomfortable experience. The fact, heavily veiled at the instant, but glimpsed, felt vaguely, by the reader is that for the first time Isabel is in the presence of evil.

As described by Wells, the fiction of James is not marked by moral values; and yet the moral mark is very deep on that fiction. To one who has heard a great deal of James but never read him—and how many are in that state!—nothing is more surprising in a novel of his than his persistent sense of the evil in European civilization and the innocence in the American character. For Christopher Newman in *The American*, one of his earliest masterpieces, as for Lambert Strether in *The Ambassadors*, one of his latest, an essential note in contact with Europe is the note of deep, strange, mysterious evil. Henry James was all his life a man of remarkable, simple goodness, kind, considerate, generous, elevated; and, for all the variety and intensity of his associations with the splendor, the riot, the fascination, the decadence of artists and aristocrats in at least three European countries, his youthful sensitiveness to evil remained unabated. One has but to compare his fiction with George Moore's to appreciate the implications of his moral fastidiousness.

### III

Is there no substance, then, to the charges Mr. Wells brought against the fiction of James? His characters are not apolitical; if they are agnostic, they have strongly defined moral attitudes—if not Christians, they are living on the moral legacy of Christian faith and ethics; they are not bloodless, for they participate in harrowing, even horrible, situations. The charge that they are strongly unified,

and that the novels in which they appear are strongly unified, at last points to a reality. With it we pass from the substance of James's fiction to the form.

The charge that James over-unified his novels is a counterattack on behalf of Wells's fiction. At the beginning of *Tono-Bungay*, speaking through the mask of George Ponderevo, Wells warns the reader of what a variegated mass lies ahead:

I warn you this book is going to be something of an agglomeration. I want to trace my social trajectory (and my uncle's) as the main line of my story, but as this is my first novel and almost certainly my last, I want to get in, too, all sorts of things that struck me, things that amused me and impressions I got—even although they don't minister directly to my narrative at all. I want to set out my own queer love experiences too, such as they are, for they troubled and distressed and swayed me hugely, and they still seem to me to contain all sorts of irrational and debatable elements that I shall be the clearer-headed for getting on paper. And possibly I may even flow into descriptions of people who are really no more than people seen in transit, just because it amuses me to recall what they said and did to us, and more particularly how they behaved in the brief but splendid glare of *Tono-Bungay* and its still more glaring offspring. It lit some of them up, I can assure you! Indeed I want to get in all sorts of things. My ideas of a novel all through are comprehensive rather than austere.

The passage is given at length because a summary of it might so easily be thought a caricature: It presses the conception of a novel as a glorious ragbag for the author's experiences and ideas, almost to the point of explosion. The only unity maintained, the only unity desired, is the inevitable unity that is conferred upon a work because it proceeds from one mind. To this unity in Wells's novels we have seen that James was sensitive—he relished the spectacle of that mind in eruption. The liberality, the comprehensiveness, of James's mind, as of his con-

ception of the novel, appear in his acceptance of Wells's formula for fiction as legitimate, valuable, interesting.

That there are dangers in Wells's versatility needs little emphasis in our time. It is important rather to note its virtues. These have been admirably presented by J. D. Beresford, himself a distinguished novelist, in his paper, "Experiment in the Novel," in the collection of lectures at the London City Literary Institute entitled *Tradition and Experiment in Present-Day Literature*.

In Beresford's view, an experimental novel—*Tristram Shandy*, *Ulysses*, *The World of William Clissold*—is one that cannot shape a tradition; it is too individual for that. "Wells," he says, "has not given us a new form, he has only displayed his contempt for all conventional limitations. And to imitate him successfully in that, the imitator must have an equal measure of genius." The impulse to ignore conventional limitations arose in Wells from a notable richness in ideas combined with an apostle's fervor to make these ideas prevail. What of Dickens' fervor, we may ask? Beresford draws an interesting distinction between Wells and earlier propagandist novelists. "Between inventing a story to illustrate a social evil and using the novel as a vehicle for airing our opinions, venting our grievances, or attempting a political reformation, there is a very great difference. . . . What we do not find in any of these classical [nineteenth century] examples is a sudden lowering of the curtain and a waiting stage while the author comes in front in order to tell us not only what he is up to with the figures of his drama but also, perhaps, what his opinions are on this and that."

It is essential to Beresford's case for Wells as a great experimental novelist that the difference between him and his

predecessors be shown as a difference not merely in degree but in kind. This I do not think we can concede. Thackeray and George Eliot were prone to interrupt their stories and to pour out their opinions on this and that; the very titles of two unforgettable chapters are enough to show the truth of this observation: "How to Live on Nothing a Year" in *Vanity Fair* and "A Variation of Protestantism Unknown to Bossuet" in *The Mill on the Floss*. Wells differs from the earlier writers merely in degree. What specially characterizes him, apart from the sheer mass of his comment on this and that, is its up-to-the-minute substance. It is undoubtedly helpful, in reading *Middlemarch*, to have a moderate familiarity with the First Reform Bill, Roman Catholic Emancipation, and the Corn Laws; but it is necessary, not merely helpful, in reading, say, *Joan and Peter*, to know a great deal about the Boer War, the conflicts and compromises between imperialism and liberalism in the first decade of our century, and the course of British policy and diplomacy in the years leading to the first World War. To the intelligent reader of the book when it first appeared Wells's demands were not oppressive; if he had been reading the *Manchester Guardian* or even the *Spectator* he would know all he needed. But to us, and yet more to a later generation, the demands must seem oppressive, far more so than Thackeray's or George Eliot's. I quote two sentences as a sample of something that exceeds the manner of the Victorian propagandists:

Sir Horace Plunkett, Peter had a certain toleration for; but it was evident he suspected A. E. Peter did not talk very much, but he

listened with a bright scepticism to brilliant displays of good talk . . . and betrayed rather than expressed his conviction that Nationalism, Larkinism, Sinn Feinism, Ulsterism and Unionism were all insults to the human intelligence, material for the alienist rather than serious propositions.

What annotations those sentences require! A reader now twenty or twenty-five years old will not recognize the name of Sir Horace Plunkett, and what he may know of A. E.'s poetry and mysticism will confuse rather than clarify. Of "Larkinism" he will know nothing, and here I share his ignorance. And what knowledge can he have to help him discriminate "Nationalism" from "Sinn Feinism" or, towards the other end of the political spectrum, "Unionism" from "Ulsterism"? Here is the first great weakness in the Wellsian formula for fiction: The material ages almost as quickly as the editorial columns in a political weekly.

The difference between Wells and the propagandist novelists of the nineteenth century is, then, merely a difference of degree; and if Wells's greater prodigality in political, social, and moral criticism has won for him a peculiar intensity of interest at the time when his books have appeared, it has shortened the period in which they continue to be read. It is already plain that his best work belongs to the past.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The defect found in Wells does not dispose of his charge that James's novels suffered from over-unification. James carried unification to its extreme in *The Ambassadors*, *The Wings of the Dove*, and *The Golden Bowl*. I have studied the effects, good and bad, of his delight in unification as exhibited in these novels in a paper, "James and Conrad," in the *Yale Review* (Winter, 1946).

## Banquo, Loyal Subject

OLIVE HENNEBERGER<sup>1</sup>

IN A "Note on *Macbeth*, Act II, Scene 1," in the January, 1946, number of *College English*, Mr. Perry D. Westbrook gives an interesting interpretation of the actions of Banquo during the following well-known speech to his son Fleance:

Hold, take my sword. There's husbandry in heaven;  
Their candles are all out. Take thee that too.  
A heavy summons lies like lead upon me,  
And yet I would not sleep. Merciful powers,  
Restrain in me the cursed thoughts that nature  
Gives way to in repose!

(Enter Macbeth and a servant with a torch.)

Give me my sword.

Who's there?

Westbrook begins by pointing out what seems to him the "generally accepted interpretation" of this speech, i.e., that "Banquo has dreamed of murdering the King so that, according to the Witches' prophecy, Fleance will succeed to the throne of Scotland."

As Westbrook himself concedes, there is nothing original in the concept of Banquo as a silent accessory to Macbeth's crime,<sup>2</sup> but, in my opinion, his statement that this judgment is concurred in by the majority of readers is open to question. Certainly it would not seem to be the consensus of opinion of

eminent and reputable scholars, such as W. J. Rolfe<sup>3</sup> and George Lyman Kittredge,<sup>4</sup> both of whom insist on the unfaltering loyalty of Banquo.

The chief purpose of Westbrook's article, however, is not to give an evaluation of Banquo's character but rather to determine the motivation for Banquo's handing his sword and presumably his dagger—"Take thee that too,"—to Fleance at the beginning of the speech. These actions, Westbrook suggests, are prompted by Banquo's fear that, if he keeps the weapons, he will use them on the King. I quote:

I do not mean that Banquo actually would have murdered the King, but that he was afraid that he would. Banquo was suffering from a guilty conscience because of his murderous dreams. He was appalled by the ideas that had entered his sleeping mind. He had become so afraid of his thoughts and dreams that he hardly dared go to bed and face for another night such an unexpectedly dreadful side of his nature.

Westbrook continues by observing that "such sudden mistrusts of one's self in a given situation are common with normal people as well as the insane. . . . Who has not, for a fleeting moment at least, shuddered at what he might do with a razor or shotgun that happens to be in his hands?"

That moments of self-distrust are understandable and fairly common in

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<sup>2</sup> Among the most frequently cited advocates of Banquo's duplicity is Flathe, *Shakespeare in seiner Wirklichkeit*, quoted by Furness. Flathe believes that Banquo secretly indorses Macbeth's traitorous act as the only means by which the Witches' prediction concerning his own offspring could be brought to pass.

<sup>3</sup> Rolfe terms Flathe's estimate of Banquo's character "perverse" in *Macbeth*, ed. W. J. Rolfe, p. 182 nn.

<sup>4</sup> *Macbeth*, ed. G. L. Kittredge, 1939.



human experience is indisputable, but it is a little difficult to see the applicability of this psychological phenomenon to the behavior of Banquo in the scene under discussion. In my opinion, Westbrook's theory is founded wholly on conjecture and is not supported by any evidence provided by Shakespeare. Let us, therefore, turn to the play and examine in detail the scenes in which Banquo appears and the speeches which in any way cast light on the subject of his loyalty to Duncan.

We first meet Banquo with Macbeth in Act I, scene 3, shortly after the battle in which both men have distinguished themselves fighting for the King. They are almost immediately accosted on the heath by the Witches. It is Banquo who first observes the Weird Women and who, after their three hails to Macbeth as "thane of Glamis," "thane of Cawdor," and "king hereafter," charges them to speak to him. After their amazing greetings to his companion, Banquo would have been less than human to do otherwise! But we are made to feel from his words that he takes neither the Witches nor their prognostications seriously. He addresses them in a spirit of curiosity or even of levity, much as one would address a fortune-teller at a carnival booth:

Speak then to me, who neither beg nor fear  
Your favours nor your hate.

After the Third Witch has prophesied to Banquo, "Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none," it is Macbeth who demands to know more as the Weird Sisters vanish. To Banquo the entire episode has seemed so fantastic that he is inclined to regard it as a figment of their imagination and to mistrust his own senses. He asks, "Have we eaten on the insane root/That takes the reason prisoner?"

Almost at once Ross and Angus enter to proclaim Macbeth thane of Cawdor by order of the King, an occurrence which, perforce, lends stimulus to the "supernatural soliciting" and provides an "earnest of success,/Commencing in a truth." But from the moment that the Witches' prophecy is thus made to assume importance in the mind of Banquo, he regards them and their powers as evil, and I can find no indication in the text that Banquo either wishes to employ any unlawful means to effect their prediction concerning his progeny or fears that he will do so. In response to Ross's message from the King, Banquo queries, "What, can the devil speak true?" and later in the same scene he adds:

. . . oftentimes, to win us to our harm,  
The instruments of darkness tell us truths,  
Win us with honest trifles, to betray's  
In deepest consequence.

Banquo and Macbeth next appear in the following scene, which takes place at the palace of the King. Duncan, having expressed his gratitude to Macbeth for his services, continues:

Welcome hither.  
I have begun to plant thee and will labour  
To make thee full of growing. Noble Banquo,  
That hast no less deserv'd, nor must be known  
No less to have done so, let me uphold thee  
And hold thee to my heart.

To which Banquo replies, "There if I grow,/The harvest is your own," words which are surely the essence of loyalty!

Aside from speaking a few lines in Act I, scene 6, which are not pertinent to the problem under consideration here, Banquo does not appear on stage again until the scene with Fleance in which Westbrook makes him guilty of the impulse, albeit suppressed, to take the King's life.

In Banquo's "Hold, take my sword," Westbrook finds evidence of mental agi-

tation and observes that Banquo does *not* say, " 'Here, take this,' as would say a man leisurely undressing for the night." But "Here, take this," followed by "Take thee that too" in the next line would scarcely evince great verbal facility on the part of Banquo—to say nothing of Shakespeare! Moreover, when Banquo, speaking as an Elizabethan gentleman, says, "Hold, take my sword," isn't "Here, take this," precisely what he means? "Hold" as an exclamation in Shakespeare's plays is usually glossed simply as "here" and is not necessarily indicative of perturbation on the part of the speaker. In *Romeo and Juliet*,<sup>5</sup> for example, Lady Capulet says, "Hold, take these keys and fetch more spices, nurse," and in *Twelfth Night*<sup>6</sup> Antonio says to Sebastian, "Hold, sir, here's my purse. In the south suburbs at the Elephant/Is best to lodge." If Banquo had been overwrought when he spoke to Fleance, as Westbrook contends, would he have followed through immediately with the leisurely and poetically beautiful observation on the stars, "There's husbandry in heaven; Their candles are all out"?

The most obvious explanation for Banquo's handing his sword to Fleance seems to me the most satisfactory and is in no way suggestive of internal conflict. The wearing of a sword was *de rigueur* for a gentleman or a soldier in attendance upon his sovereign. Banquo, having presumably escorted the King to his apartments and left him for the night, lays aside his sword to make himself more comfortable before seeking out Macbeth—much as one would don less formal attire for a good-night chat with his week-end host after a strenuous evening

spent in entertaining a distinguished guest.

Since Banquo's act can thus be quite simply and naturally accounted for, the strongest support for Westbrook's contention would seem to be the lines:

Merciful powers,  
Restrain in me the cursed thoughts that nature  
Gives way to in repose!<sup>7</sup>

What, specifically, are these "cursed thoughts"? It seems rather gratuitous to assume that they refer to Banquo's dreams of murdering the King since Banquo himself identifies them just after the entrance of Macbeth: "I dreamt last night of the three Weird Sisters." Banquo's consistent attitude toward the Witches has been such that he would unquestionably regard dreams of them as "cursed thoughts."

Another possible explanation of Banquo's words is that they refer to Macbeth himself. Banquo has, as yet, no suspicions of Macbeth, but he realizes that his friend has been profoundly effected from the first by their meeting with the Witches: "Look how our partner's rapt."<sup>8</sup> Banquo also reveals in a subsequent speech that he considers it very possible in this connection for Macbeth to make proposals not consonant with his, Banquo's, sense of honor. Macbeth protests that he has not been thinking of the Weird Sisters, but adds:

Yet when we can entreat an hour to  
serve,  
We would spend it in some words upon  
that business,  
If you would grant the time.

*Banquo.* At your kind'st leisure.

*Macbeth.* If you shall cleave to my consent,  
when 'tis,  
It shall make honour for you.

<sup>7</sup> Professor Kittredge remarks, "Banquo's prayer was of the kind common enough in old days" (*op. cit.*, pp. 128-29 nn.).

<sup>8</sup> Act I, scene 3.

<sup>5</sup> Act IV, scene 4.

<sup>6</sup> Act III, scene 3.

*Banquo.* So I lose none  
 In seeking to augment it but still keep  
 My bosom franchis'd and allegiance  
 clear,  
 I shall be counsell'd.

Professor Kittredge believes that "Macbeth intends Banquo to suppose that he means to wait patiently for the old King's death and then to become a candidate for the crown."<sup>9</sup> But whatever Macbeth's implication may be, Shakespeare has made Banquo distinctly aver that he will have no part in plans, present or future, which would compromise his sense of steadfast loyalty to the King. In any event, it seems more defensible to explain the "cursed thoughts" as a direct reference to other lines in the text rather than as an oblique reference to a murderous impulse, never again alluded to, in the dark inner recesses of Banquo's mind.

There is another very practical matter which I believe should be considered in relation to Banquo's supposed mistrust of himself. As many editors have noted, the most desirable and secure apartments in Macbeth's castle were, on the fateful night, occupied by Macbeth and his wife, the King, his sons, and their attendants and were separated from the rest of the building by a gate. Once this gate was locked, Banquo, Macduff, or anyone else lodged in the other part of the castle could gain entrance to the King's chambers only after having been admitted by the porter.<sup>10</sup> Why, then, would Banquo, in even his most uncontrolled and irrational moments, feel it necessary as a precautionary measure to give his sword to Fleance, since in order to kill the King he would have had to summon the porter or break down the gate, enter Duncan's apartments, over-

power the grooms, whom even the intrepid Lady Macbeth has found it advisable to drug almost to death, kill the King, and escape without detection—as he must certainly do if Fleance is to profit by his misdeed? Such feats would be spectacular for a Hollywood hero!

In Act II, scene 3, the murder of Duncan is discovered, and in the confusion attendant on the discovery, Shakespeare has deliberately and purposefully made Banquo the representative and mouthpiece of loyalty for the entire group. He says:

And when we have our naked frailties hid,  
 That suffer in exposure, let us meet  
 And question this most bloody piece of work,  
 To know it further. Fears and scruples shake us.  
 In the great hand of God, I stand, and thence  
 Against the undivulg'd pretence I fight  
 Of treasonous malice.

Shakespeare's reason for putting this speech into the mouth of Banquo seems clear enough. The date most commonly assigned to *Macbeth* is 1606. James I had come to the throne of England three years earlier. According to legend, Banquo was one of James I's ancestors, and Shakespeare had proved himself most adept in paying graceful compliments to the reigning sovereign.<sup>11</sup> Many people believe that the Doctor's reference in Act IV, scene 3, to the "crew of wretched souls" waiting to be healed of scrofula, or the King's Evil, by the royal touch of Edward the Confessor, was also intended as a tribute to James I. For Edward the Confessor was reputedly one of James's native English ancestors, and the Stuart monarch had graciously revived the cus-

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Oberon's famous speech in honor of Queen Elizabeth in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act II, scene 1, and also *Henry IV*, Part I, Act III, scene 1, in which Shakespeare shows how England would have been divided under the feudal barons. The Tudors had ended the Wars of the Roses.

<sup>9</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 130 nn.

<sup>10</sup> See Act II, scene 3.

tom of the laying-on of hands for which Edward had been famous. How, then, can Westbrook reconcile these compliments of Shakespeare's with the presumed intimation earlier in the play that Banquo, James's ancestor, was even passively in accord with the treasonable purpose of Macbeth?

At the beginning of Act III, Banquo appears for the last time, except for the scene in which he is murdered. Some months have passed since the coronation of Macbeth, and Banquo soliloquizes:

Thou hast it now—King, Cawdor, Glamis, all  
As the Weird Women promis'd; and I fear  
Thou play'dst most foully for't.

A conversation between Banquo and Macbeth follows, and after Banquo's departure, Macbeth discloses in soliloquy that he regards Banquo as a definite menace to his being "safely thus." He continues:

Our fears in Banquo stick deep; and in his  
royalty of nature  
Reigns that which would be fear'd.

Macbeth thus gives us his final estimate of Banquo's character. If Westbrook's conjecture were correct, might not Banquo, once the murder of Duncan was a *fait accompli*, have admitted that he had not been, on the whole, against a change of regime? Macbeth was in sore need of adherents, and, having no children of his own, he might have rewarded Banquo

for such an admission by naming Fleance his successor. Yet we see that Macbeth regards Banquo to the last as a dangerous adversary and orders his death along with that of Fleance.

One more point remains to be made in refutation of Westbrook's theory. It is contrary to Shakespeare's practice to leave his readers or his audience in any doubt concerning his villains or his traitors. They may, on occasion, confuse or deceive the other characters, but never the audience! Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, Iago, Edmund, King Claudius, Richard III, and the Earl of Worcester, to instance a few, unmistakably proclaim their intentions in soliloquy or conversation relatively early in the plays in which they appear; and any internal conflict to which they give voice is never so subtly phrased that we are left speculating as to whether such a conflict has actually taken place!

It seems reasonable, therefore, to assume that anything not evident, once the facts of a play as a whole are understood, was not Shakespeare's intent; and, in my opinion, when Banquo's speech in Act II, scene 1, is considered not in isolation but in relation to *Macbeth* as a whole, it is unwarrantable to conclude that Shakespeare conceived of Banquo as other than an uncompromisingly loyal subject and worthy progenitor of a long line of English kings!



## American Literature in American Education<sup>1</sup>

MARTIN STAPLES SHOCKLEY<sup>2</sup>

MY PURPOSE in this paper is to consider the relation of British literature to American literature in American institutions of higher education and the relation of the study of American literature to the aims and purposes of education in modern America. This is by no means a new subject,<sup>3</sup> but it is one which we need to keep constantly before us, one which is particularly vital in our present academic turmoil. Let me disavow in the beginning any anti-British prejudice; I believe that literary scholarship based upon geography or patriotism is as repugnant to all of us as literary scholarship which has not yet outgrown the colonial inferiority complex. The problem for us to consider is the present status of American literature in American colleges and universities.

Understanding this problem requires some examination of historical develop-

ment and academic background. The Modern Language Association of America was founded in 1883. When the present organization of research groups was set up, forty-one groups were established, but American literature was completely ignored. Not one of the Association's presidents has been a scholar in the field of American literature; although the Association's annual presidential addresses have considered almost every other modern literature, not one has discussed American literature.<sup>4</sup> In its first

<sup>4</sup> Since this paper was written, President Robert Herndon Fife delivered his presidential address, "Nationalism and Scholarship," to the New York meeting of the Modern Language Association. Professor Fife has so ably dealt with some of the issues with which this article is concerned that I have taken the liberty of excerpting a few passages.

"This raises the old question as to whether we Americans are conscious that we have a national culture and are capable of implementing it through our studies. The path to independence in this is still blocked by remnants of the parental complex. . . .

"No one will deny that there has been a change in this regard in the twentieth century and that the schools are building a new national consciousness. We are also assured by critics that American literature has achieved independence of the British, but it is doubtful whether the traditional and contemporary elements that distinguish our national culture from that of our English cousins are recognized by literary scholarship. It is of the highest importance that they should be. . . .

"If then we in America are to create a national scholarship in letters, we must extend our knowledge of the literature of other nations. We must also know our own more widely. A good deal has been said recently about the default of the schools in teaching American history. Certainly much could be said about the insufficient teaching of American literature in the colleges. Here we cannot put the blame upon the professional curriculum makers. The lack of a systematic grounding in the literature of our country goes further, indeed, than the colleges, for I

<sup>1</sup> A paper read before the college section of the Oklahoma Council of Teachers of English on February 18, 1944.

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<sup>3</sup> John T. Flanagan, "American Literature in American Colleges," *College English*, I (March, 1940), 513-19; H. M. Jones, "The Orphan Child of the Curriculum," *English Journal*, XXV (May, 1936), 376-88; H. M. Jones, "American Scholarship and American Literature," *American Literature* VIII (May, 1936), 115-24; E. E. Leisy, "The Significance of Recent Scholarship in American Literature," *College English*, II (November, 1940), 115-25; M. S. Shockley and C. C. Walcutt, "The American Literature Curriculum at the University of Oklahoma," *College English*, I (May, 1940), 679-85; Floyd Stovall, "What Price American Literature?" *Sewanee Review*, XLIX (October-December, 1941), 469-75.

fifty years, P.M.L.A. published 1,405 articles, of which 29 dealt directly with American literature.<sup>5</sup> The distinguished gentlemen who in the past controlled the policies of the organization, although themselves American scholars teaching American students in American universities, neglected, I believe, no other literature as they did their own. The present organization of discussion groups within the Modern Language Association includes: British, thirteen; French, seven; German, five; Spanish, four; Italian, two. One group each is allowed to Slavonic, Scandinavian, Portuguese, Celtic, and American.

This condition extended into, and helps to explain, conditions which have existed in many departments of English in American colleges and universities. The professors who composed these departments were mainly, if not exclusively, interested in British, not American, literature. Their training had been in British literature, with American literature neglected or in many cases completely ignored. Probably we have all heard the well-known story of the professor of English who inquired with gracious condescension, "Is there any American literature?" There is another story of an elderly English professor who, upon learning that a new member of his department had had no training in American literature, remarked approvingly, "A

very well-educated man." I happen to know that both stories are true.

In some departments, courses in American literature have been taught, somewhat grudgingly, by professors whose training was exclusively in British literature. The result has been unfortunate. Too often the professor knew little about the subject he was supposed to teach; frequently he regarded it as an imposition; sometimes he felt that he was being shunted into a sideline, a minor appendage to the major work of the department. Because the ablest members of any department are those who are most engrossed in their own scholarship, classes in American literature, when they were added to the departmental curriculum, too often were loaded upon the least able members of the department. It is easy to understand why courses in American literature have often been trivial and shallow.

English departments have been reticent about adding scholars in American literature. The tradition was strong. Even the name was a misnomer and a source of confusion. One professor of English explained to me quite seriously that we are in departments of English and that our business therefore is to teach English literature, and American literature has no place in a department of English.

When English departments added persons competent to teach American literature, those persons were frequently regarded as outsiders, as interlopers who had no business meddling in the affairs of a department of English. American literature was actually regarded as a threat. The reasoning went something like this: American literature courses are popular with students. That is bad. If we allow that sort of thing to go on, students

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have heard scholars who are highly competent in English literature confess to considerable lack of knowledge of our own; some are indifferent about it; some seem to be rather proud of their ignorance of this subject. Such persons have never discovered America, no matter how far back their family history may go into the Colonial period. Here we need a program for the Americanization of Americans. . . ."

<sup>5</sup> Jones, "American Scholarship and American Literature," pp. 122-23.

will be taking courses in American literature instead of courses in British literature. Then what will happen to my course in the Cavalier Poets? Something has got to be done about it. . . . So the American literature courses were scheduled for Saturdays, or in the late afternoon, or at some other inconvenient hour; and department majors were advised against taking "unimportant" courses in American literature.

English departments in American colleges and universities have traditionally devoted themselves to British literature, sometimes even to British literary history, which has been taught so narrowly and so dryly that talented and creative students have sought relief from arid lecture notes in the more active fields of speech, drama, journalism, where they found the opportunities which the moribund departments of English had denied them.

One reason for the anachronistic condition which has retarded the teaching of American literature has been the unfortunate fact that many English departments have been controlled by old men. Traditionally, the headship or the chairmanship of a department has been awarded to the member with the longest years of faithful service. Of course, we all recognize our soundest scholars, keenest critics, ablest teachers, among our elder colleagues. Sometimes, however, other considerations and extracurricular activities have prevented our older colleagues from keeping up with the new and far-reaching changes which have been taking place in our profession.

As a result, many English professors in American colleges were teaching what they studied at (for example) Harvard thirty or forty years ago. And forty years ago there was no scholarship in American

literature at Harvard. F. J. Child completed his monumental collection of English and Scottish ballads in 1898; but no American professor collected or studied American ballads for many years thereafter. In 1904 G. L. Kittredge wrote, "Ballad-making, so far as the English-speaking nations are concerned, is a lost art; and the same may be said of ballad-singing."<sup>6</sup> Had American scholars ventured among the native folk of their own nation, they would have heard mountaineers in the Alleghenies and the Ozarks singing the traditional British ballads of Lord Randal and Bonny Barbara Allen; but they would also have heard Negro stevedores along the Mississippi singing new and compelling folk songs of John Henry and his mighty hammer; lonesome cowboy ballads echoing across the lone prairie. It is an amazing fact that a native American literary tradition grew up and existed for generations before it was recognized by American literary scholars, among the first of whom was, of course, the late, great Kittredge.

While professors of literature in colleges scattered over our country have been teaching the notes they gleaned from the learned and brilliant lectures of men like Child, Kittredge, and Babbitt many years ago, literary study at Harvard has been revolutionized. One of our most distinguished scholars of American literature and our most eloquent advocate of the study of American literature, Howard Mumford Jones, has recently served as dean of the graduate school at Harvard, and American literature has not suffered in the recent reorientation of literary study. The department of English, while it does not neglect the study

<sup>6</sup> *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (Houghton Mifflin Co., 1904), p. xiii.

of British literature, now includes Howard Mumford Jones, Kenneth B. Murdock, Perry Miller, and F. O. Matthiessen, four of the nation's most distinguished scholars of American literature—and several more of perhaps somewhat less distinction. What I have to say of Harvard applies, of course, to many other universities. I consider Harvard a particularly good example, however, because its influence has been perhaps more important than the influence of any other university in the field of literary study in America, and because Harvard, once our leading institution in the study of British literature, is now our leading institution in the study of American literature.

I am not convinced that a program of study which was designed more than fifty years ago for the sons of wealthy Easterners was ever the best solution to our educational problems. Certainly, no one of us now has his head so far in the sand of traditionalism as to wish to perpetuate that system. Psychology, economics, sociology, anthropology, political science, are relatively new additions to the academic world. But even the staid old fields of mathematics, physics, and chemistry have been blasted wide open as the result of revolutionary developments by the brilliant research scholars in those fields. Our whole educational concept needs to be renovated if education is to survive and to serve our people.

American literature is a comparatively new field of scholarship. Most of the serious study of American literature has been done within the last two decades. Our professional periodical, *American Literature*, was founded in 1929. The first thorough book on the American language was published in 1919, not by a professor in an American university, but by H. L.

Mencken. The definitive dictionary of American English was completed just a few months ago at the University of Chicago. It is understandable that many American professors of literature have never studied American literature. The field has been developed too recently. Many able scholars have been too much engrossed in their own research to attempt to master a whole new field of literary scholarship.

Despite this unfortunate academic lag, American scholars have in recent years gone far toward correcting previous oversights. Scholarship devoted to the American cultural heritage has produced such significant studies as H. M. Jones's *America and French Culture*, V. L. Parrington's *Main Currents in American Thought*, Charles and Mary Beard's *The Rise of American Civilization*, F. O. Matthiessen's *American Renaissance*, and many other works of primary importance not only in the study of American civilization but also in the study of literature. Not only do we now have *American Literature*, but numerous other scholarly and professional periodicals have published significant essays and research articles on various phases of American culture. We have been making up for lost time.

The curriculums of American colleges and universities have reflected the change. Courses in American literature are beginning to occupy positions of prominence in the offerings of English departments, and in some colleges are required subjects—as they should be. Well-developed programs majoring in the study of American civilization are now in operation at Harvard, Yale, the University of Chicago, Princeton, Southern Methodist University, the University of Minnesota, and many other institu-



tions throughout America. We hope that we shall never produce another generation of American citizens ignorant of their own cultural heritage.

Not all institutions seem to be aware of this change. For example, the catalogue of a typical large middle-western university lists fifty-seven courses in British literature and five courses in American literature, a proportion of eleven to one in favor of British literature. The catalogue of a "little, rich" private college lists the following one-semester courses in literature: French, twelve; British, eleven; Latin, ten; Greek, eight; German, eight; Spanish, eight; American, two. The catalogue of the large university lists thirty-two English Department members of professorial rank, not one of whom is a recognized scholar in American literature. The "little, rich" college has an English Department of six professors, not one of whom is competent to teach American literature. Of course, there is more British literature than American literature, just as there is more British history than American history. My point is that we cannot teach everything; we must decide what we consider most important in the educational development of the students we teach. A survey of opinion on the relation of British to American literature taken by Floyd Stovall in 1940 revealed the consensus that from 30 to 50 per cent of the courses offered should be in American literature. It would seem to follow that the personnel of our English departments should approximate that proportional representation.

Let us for a moment consider the problem of pedagogical expediency. We all know that the British tradition, British systems, customs, religions, landscape, flora and fauna, are foreign to our stu-

dents. Not many of my students can identify a skylark or a nightingale; they all know robins and mockingbirds. Not many of them really enter into my enthusiastic descriptions of the cathedrals of England or the lush green beauty of the Lake Country. They all know about northers, dust storms, and dry runs as a part of their own experience. And I believe we all agree that the teaching of literature, if it is worth teaching at all, must enter into the experience of the student.

Before our students can understand the satires of Dryden, they must master one of the most complicated religious and political backgrounds that I have ever tried to understand. (I might as well be honest and confess that I can never teach these pieces without carefully reviewing my notes. I doubt that my students remember it any better than I do.) "The Rape of the Lock" is one of our standard sophomore poems; but no sophomore can understand it without first understanding a social world more strange to him than the world of Alley Oop or Buck Rogers would be if he hadn't been reading about them every day in the paper. I sometimes wonder just how much our sophomores get out of "Gawayn and the Grene Knyght" or the excerpts we teach from *The Faerie Queene* or the traditional first book of *Paradise Lost*. Even a short poem like "Lycidas" is embedded in a tradition that goes back to Theocritus, a tradition which is a part of the cultural heritage of students at Oxford and Cambridge, but not a part of the cultural heritage of the students you and I teach. I am afraid that many of the standard pieces of British literature which we survey for our students remain little more than names to be remembered until after the final examination.

I might suggest that instead of lecturing to your class on the ecclesiastical backgrounds of "Lycidas" you discuss with them (to take an extreme example) "A Student in Economics." They really rise to that. It is something that they know and feel; it is, in short, related to their own experience. I suspect that, on the level where we first meet our students' minds and emotions, the aims of the study of literature might be better realized through George Milburn's story, which they can all understand, than through John Milton's elegy, which many of them will never understand. And we hope that, after mastering the comparatively simple and direct satire of an educational system familiar to them, our students can go on to master the more difficult and complex satire of ecclesiastical conditions in seventeenth-century England. Or, in other words, let's teach them long division before we require them to do calculus.

The analogy is not irrelevant. Sometimes our approach to literature seems to be a logical contradiction, a pedagogical absurdity. After two semesters of parsing sentences, distinguishing between participles and gerunds, and memorizing nineteen rules for the use of commas (and such antiquated methods of teaching freshman English are still in use), students are assaulted with *Beowulf*, Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton—the most complex and difficult literature we have to teach. There is an element of pathos as well as of absurdity in watching a student wrestle with the moral and political allegory of *The Faerie Queene* when actually his level of literacy leaves him unable to cope with the relation of ideas in one of Longfellow's sonnets. There is more absurdity than pathos in observing the professor lecturing to his freshmen at ten o'clock on

why the order of paragraph development should be from the familiar to the unfamiliar, and then at eleven o'clock introducing his sophomores to the study of literature—beginning with the most unfamiliar literature they will have to study. Music teachers, I have observed, begin with something like "The Farmer in the Dell" or "My Country 'Tis of Thee"—not with the third movement of the "Moonlight Sonata." Of course, we all wish that our sophomores were prepared to read Chaucer and Spenser with understanding and appreciation; I am afraid that all too often they are not.

I do not mean that we should neglect the teaching of British literature or the historical backgrounds which are necessary to understand that literature. I do mean that we should teach American literature in relation to the civilization which it interprets. And I believe that for our students the latter is more important than the former. I agree that our students should know about wayfaring life in the Middle Ages, the guild system in fourteenth-century England, the conditions of the peasants under Henry VII; but I believe it is more important that they understand *The Grapes of Wrath*, *The Little Foxes*, *Native Son*, in relation to the civilization which they interpret.

One of the reasons we should teach American literature is that the students like it. It interprets a life they know, a cultural heritage they recognize as their own, a civilization of which they are a part. In it they find characters, situations, ideas, and problems which are familiar to them. They find reflections of their own experience through which we can help them to clarify, intensify, interpret, evaluate experience in a way that will arouse critical faculties, challenge judgments, give reality and meaning to principles and ideals.

Yes, of course, this is what all good literature does. It is what we want our students to get from Chaucer and Shakespeare, from Wordsworth and Browning. They can also get it from Homer, Dante, Cervantes, Goethe. My point is that the aims of literary study can be realized more directly and more meaningfully through literature which is more closely related to the students' own knowledge and experience, with a minimum of wastage because of unfamiliar and difficult backgrounds.

Let us not quibble about the "greatness" of Shakespeare in relation to Eugene O'Neill. I suspect that we have erred in the other direction through insular traditionalism in the teaching of minor British figures like George Withers and Matthew Prior who have slight claim to inclusion in a literary training which excludes Sophocles and Tolstoy. And, let us be honest, we have too often, in the education of students majoring in our departments, emphasized trivialities of the British tradition while ignoring true greatness outside the tight little isle.

Only those of us still unable to rise above the inhibitions of British colonialism apologize for American culture. The condition is peculiar to American teachers of literature. Music, painting, sculpture, architecture, have outgrown the inferiority complex which teachers of literature still preserve. It is interesting to observe parenthetically that several American writers (Poe, Whitman, and Dreiser, for example) were accorded international critical acclaim before they were recognized by the timid and self-conscious critics of their own country. From Benjamin Franklin to Thomas Wolfe we have a line of great American writers, a literary tradition which we should make a part of the lives of the students we teach.

It is time we ceased to regard American literature as a trivial educational sideline, an awkward curricular appendage, a sort of cultural tail to the British lion. It is time we turned to our literature to find the most artistic and powerful interpretations of American life and American ideals. And let us be quick to resent and to refute irresponsible imputations of "isolationism." American literature is uniquely international in character. Our republic was conceived and established by men who thought and wrote as citizens of the world, who spoke, not of the rights of Americans, but of the rights of man. Our greatest writers are those who have given most effective expression to the ideals of universal humanity; and, while the melting-pot may have been more metaphor than fact, nevertheless even the metaphor represents a magnificent concept which has remained fairly constant from Crèvecoeur to Louis Adamic.

Today, our responsibilities are greater than ever before. Some of us doubt that what we call liberal education will survive the present academic catastrophe; some of us doubt that what has passed for liberal education deserves to survive. Of one thing we may all be sure: what does survive will be a radical change from the complacent academic past which we have known. The controlling element in our profession has too long remained aloof from the educational revolution of our time. Now, we have to justify our professional existence in an educational world which already accuses us of ignorance, indolence, irresponsibility.

The irony and the possible tragedy of our predicament is the fact that we have much to offer. We can rescue our literature from the curricular limbo where it has languished for so long. We can make

the study of American literature the core of education in the humanities, the study of American civilization the center of liberal education in America. A large and important place in the future of American education is waiting for us. It may not wait much longer. Should we, for whatever reason, fail to fill that place, we shall be guilty not only of professional suicide but, worse, we shall have failed the society we serve at the time when it needs most what we have to teach.

Few among us are so obtuse as not to realize that we are now living through one of the great transitional periods of history. We are a part of a world in the

agonies of the greatest crisis, the greatest change, that man has survived. More has happened in our lifetime than any other generation has ever had to endure. And we are certain that even greater struggles and trials must be borne by those we teach. Our responsibility to them is to pass on to them a usable past, a tradition and a heritage in which they can find the true and enduring values which they need, and toward which even now they are groping and feeling their way. We have a great American heritage, a tradition rich with fortitude and faith, wisdom and beauty. We should use it more than we do.

## *Some Suggestions for the College Course in Vocabulary*

FRANK M. SNOWDEN, JR.<sup>1</sup>

THE conviction that a systematic and intensive study of vocabulary is necessary at the college level is growing rapidly among college teachers. Teachers of English and the classics have long recognized the importance of English word study, particularly at the secondary level, and, in recent years, have given increasing attention to vocabulary problems at the college level.<sup>2</sup> Frequent are the complaints from teachers who find that students have difficulty with subject matter because the range of their vocabulary is extremely narrow. In the light of an increasing anxiety concerning the grave lack of vocabulary knowledge

among college students, there can no longer be any doubt that the college must introduce courses which will have as the object of first importance the development of a knowledge of word-formation needed by the undergraduate body as a whole. The purpose of this paper is to suggest certain principles that should be considered by those planning courses in vocabulary at the college level.

In the first place, certain educational practices and recommendations that affect vocabulary growth among college students must be critically examined. Teachers of the liberal arts have too long ignored the concomitant evils of certain proposals made by educators on matters pertaining to the liberal arts. More books like Jacques Barzun's recent *Teacher in America*<sup>3</sup> must analyze and

<sup>1</sup> Howard University, Washington, D.C.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. W. K. Wynn, "Words, Words, Words," *College English*, IX (1940), 259; J. L. Keegan, "Words, Words, Words," *Education*, LXIV (1944), 307-8; F. M. Snowden, Jr., "The Role of the Classicist in Vocabulary Building," *Classical Journal*, XXXVII (1942), 307-10.

<sup>3</sup> Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1945.



expose, whenever necessary, prevailing educational practice. Certain educators, for example, strongly recommend the elimination of the "difficult" words appearing in college textbooks. A widely read book on educational psychology<sup>4</sup> contains this astonishing statement:

All investigations of the vocabulary load (which of course signifies meaning or concept load) of elementary and secondary school subjects show that the student has an excessive learning burden. *This is equally true of college courses.* [Italics mine.]

The authors of this book, furthermore, regard the "excessive vocabulary demand" in certain science textbooks as futile.<sup>5</sup> The estimate of the capacities of students expressed by these professors greatly underrates the abilities of the student body and is an insult to the intelligence of many students, both in high school and in college. Elmo N. Stevenson,<sup>6</sup> who studied the vocabulary of college biology textbooks, recommends the elimination of certain "difficult" words, to be replaced by phrases and descriptions. Fisher<sup>7</sup> approves a similar simplification for the "difficult" words used in educational psychology. Suggestions of this type do not ameliorate the condition but rather impair and damage the student's ability to develop sound vocabulary habits. A vocabulary, even of "difficult" words (*pace* Stevenson, Fisher, *et al.*) can be acquired by students of normal intelligence.

Our present evidence suggests that

<sup>4</sup> A. I. Gates, *et al.*, *Educational Psychology* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1942), p. 431.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 432.

<sup>6</sup> "An Investigation of the Vocabulary Problem in College Biology," *Journal of Educational Psychology*, XXVIII (1937), 663-72.

<sup>7</sup> M. L. Fisher, "Vocabulary Difficulties of Students in Educational Psychology," *Educational Research Record*, I (1928), 19-23, 27-30.

separate courses devoted solely to vocabulary should be productive of favorable results.<sup>8</sup> However, some will be chary of admitting the validity of such a course on the ground that it may be artificial and "nonfunctional." Such need not be the case. Further, as Johnson O'Connor<sup>9</sup> points out:

There may be some subtle distinction between a natural vocabulary picked up at home, at meals, and in reading, and one gained by a study of the dictionary. The latter may not be as valuable as the former. But there is nothing to show that it is harmful and the balance of evidence at the moment suggests that such a consciously, even laboriously, achieved vocabulary is an active asset.

In order for the college course in vocabulary to be of maximum benefit to the general student in all his courses, study of basic roots<sup>10</sup> and affixes must be given a place of importance. Edward D. Myers<sup>11</sup> estimates that from the three hundred and fifty roots appearing in his book about twelve thousand common English words and more than fifty thousand additional technical and semitechnical words are derived. The significance of a knowledge of these roots is obvious. If adequate attention is given to them, students will be able in other courses to attack unfamiliar words, even the "difficult" words which, in the opinion of some educators, ought to be excised.

<sup>8</sup> A detailed bibliography of recent literature on vocabulary is included on pp. 441-44 of my article, "The Classicist and Vocabulary at the College Level," *Classical Journal*, XL (1945), 437-44.

<sup>9</sup> "Vocabulary and Success," *Atlantic Monthly*, CLIII (1934), 166.

<sup>10</sup> Several recent textbooks include sections devoted to a study of roots. Cf. E. E. Burriss and L. Casson, *Latin and Greek in Current Use* (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1942); W. P. Jones, *Practical Word Study* (New York: Oxford, 1943). F. L. Bumpass and W. W. Lott, *Building a Vocabulary* (Atlanta: Allen, James & Co., 1943).

<sup>11</sup> *The Foundations of English* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1940).

Words such as the following, which occurred in a student's dictionary<sup>12</sup> of psychological terms, would present little difficulty to a student possessing even an elementary knowledge of roots: "cognition," "gregarious," "tactual," "innate," "homogeneous," etc. A failure to direct attention to the roots common to many English words probably accounts for Walter B. Johns's conclusion<sup>13</sup> that growth in vocabulary resulting from the stimulation of a special method in a special subject does not carry over largely into the acquisition of a general vocabulary.

The college course in vocabulary, in addition to presenting a study of basic roots and principles of word-formation found in the textbooks on the subject, must also include a study of the words which the student meets in his other courses. No textbook is an adequate substitute for the words drawn from the student's daily experience. One way to approach the study of these words is to require the student to bring to class each week a list of new words encountered in his other classes or in his outside reading. These lists of words, together with the dictionary meaning and the sentences in which they occur, should be brought to the attention of all the students in the class so that a record may be kept in a vocabulary notebook. The classroom discussions should examine the words in accordance with principles of word-formation previously studied. The entire class should be held responsible for a knowledge of all words which the instructor considers indispensable.

If the college course in vocabulary is to be effective, daily testing is essential.

Johns<sup>14</sup> discovered that college students acquire about one-half the vocabulary of their subjects under ordinary class procedures but that they may acquire three-fourths if tests are used to motivate the learning of vocabulary. A short, daily test, as well as a longer, weekly test, is the best means of requiring the student to review frequently. Also, in order to inculcate correct spelling habits, along with other desiderata, the daily test should be dictated.

The type of test is important. The testing used in many college courses is another factor that has debilitated the student's vocabulary powers. In many courses, it is possible to "check," "circle," or "match" one's way out of a course without having ever written a complete sentence, to say nothing of a complete paragraph. The findings of Paul A. Witty and Mabel Fry<sup>15</sup> are a warning to the teacher of vocabulary against using a type of test which would not require the student to give the exact meanings of words and to use the words studied in sentences of his own choice. If the words are to become a part of the student's active vocabulary, he must use them frequently, without the aid of dictionaries and the like, not only in class but also on tests.

Among the fundamental considerations, therefore, to be observed by planners of courses in vocabulary at the college level are the following: (1) basic roots common to thousands of English words; (2) words appearing in courses and in the student's readings; (3) frequent opportunities for the use of the words in sentences of the student's making; (4) daily tests necessitating repeated

<sup>12</sup> Fisher, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>13</sup> "The Growth of Vocabulary among University Students with Some Considerations of Fostering It," *Journal of Experimental Education*, VIII (1939), 101.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>15</sup> "The Vocabulary Content of Compositions Written by College Students," *Journal of Educational Research*, XIX (1929), 135-38.

reviews of material. The observance of these considerations will result in a course that will be of great value to the undergraduate body as a whole. The student will be equipped with certain general principles of word-formation which may be applicable to many situations. The repeated study, together with the

frequent use, of words actually met by the student in his daily experience overcomes the objections of educators that courses of this type are not "functional." Finally, the student will possess a knowledge of the power of words and will command an intelligent approach to the acquisition of a vocabulary.

## *The Direct Approach to the Teaching of Literature<sup>1</sup>*

THOMAS CLARK POLLOCK<sup>2</sup>

IN ONE sense, no approach to the teaching of anything can be direct. We must approach the teaching of literature or of anything else by looking at the students. The art of teaching, indeed, consists in making a bridge between the students and whatever we want them to learn.

In another sense, however, the approach to the teaching of literature may be either direct or circuitous. The thesis of this paper is that we should spend little time on circuitous approaches to the teaching of literature and, instead, should go as directly as possible to the teaching of the works of literature themselves. A proper understanding of this thesis, however, requires that we make at least one distinction and face at least one difficulty.

The distinction is between the actual teaching of literature in the classroom and the selection of works of literature to be read. The selection of the literature to be read must inevitably, in our cul-

ture, be indirect. It can be direct only in a culture which has an accepted canon, that is, general social agreement on the writings which all literate people should know. In America today we have, for better or worse, no such canon. We do not have even general agreement that all college students should know, for example, the English Bible and the plays of William Shakespeare. It is therefore necessary for us to approach the selection of literary materials indirectly, first deciding what social or personal values we wish students to gain from the reading of literature and then deciding what works we think will yield these values. These decisions are not easy to make in America today. Our civilization as a whole, of which our colleges are a reflection, is confused in its values; the world of literary scholarship is itself divided; and the college teacher of literature is frequently torn between his interests as a research scholar and his interests as a teacher of college students. But these decisions must be made—and should be made before the actual teaching of literature begins. Otherwise, the omissions and inclusions of particular works of litera-

<sup>1</sup> The speaker's summary of his address before the College Section at the NCTE convention in Minneapolis, November 24, 1945.

<sup>2</sup> Chairman of the department of English, School of Education, New York University.

ture are accidental rather than planned. One of the wisest things about the recent Harvard report on *General Education in a Free Society* is its insistence on "planned omissions."

I suggest that whatever standards are used for the selection of works of literature to be taught in any particular course, these two be included: first, that they be truly works of literature, as distinct from other reading matter, no matter how interesting or valuable it may be; and, second, that the meanings the works have to convey be relevant to the intellectual and spiritual needs of the students at the age when they read them. Many failures in the teaching of literature in college, as in high school, may be laid to a poor selection of the materials which students are asked to read. Too often they are neither excellent literature nor significantly meaningful to the students who read them.

Having distinguished between the selection of works which we ask students to read and the actual teaching of these works, we must face a difficulty apparently inherent in the teaching of literature. It is extremely difficult to avoid slipping away from the teaching of literature itself to the teaching of something merely related to literature: to the study of versification, for example, or the history of ideas or the biographies of authors or social backgrounds or philology or the history of the theater or semantics. I once studied under a teacher of English—this was in senior high school—who approached the teaching of "L'Allegro" from the grammatical point of view. We parsed our way from "heart-easing Mirth" to "half-regained Eurydice." Subjects such as metrics, philology, and the history of ideas are certainly relevant to the teaching of literature, and we should not try to avoid them; but a

recurring difficulty is that they tend to become ends in themselves, and we too easily find ourselves teaching them rather than the work of literature. They have a definiteness which is more easily grasped in an academic classroom than is the subtler breath and spirit of literature. At times I have sympathized with the late Edward Augustus Freeman, Regius Professor of History at Oxford, who, in 1887, opposed the teaching of literature at Oxford with this interesting argument: "The whole matter comes to this. There are many things fit for a man's personal study which are not fit for University examinations. One of them is 'literature' in the 'Lecturer's' sense. He . . . tells us that it 'cultivates the taste, educates the sympathies, enlarges the mind.' Excellent results, against which no one has a word to say. Only we cannot examine in tastes and sympathies."

Recognizing that the selection of literature should be made judiciously and that if we are not careful we will find ourselves teaching something related to literature rather than literature itself, I believe that the actual approach to the teaching of literature should be as direct as possible. The great value of the reading of literature in college—the value which makes literature a supremely humanizing instrument—is that it brings the student into firsthand contact with the best that has been thought and said concerning the nature of human beings and the quality of human experience. This value comes not from learning *about* books but from the actual reading of them. It is the central function of the teacher of literature in college to help the student to read books intelligently. There is no one single approach to this function. Any approach which succeeds in bringing the boy to the book is good.



But the best approach is that which does it most directly and with the least waste of time.

Indirect approaches to the study of literature tend to put the emphasis in the wrong place. The sociological approach to literature, for example, tends to assume that literature is important merely as an illustration of sociological problems. The historical approach to literature tends to assume that the analysis of historical backgrounds is of first importance—the backgrounds, in other words, are placed in the foreground. The philological approach tends to assume that words are more important than are the meanings they communicate. Any indirect approach tends to assume that the subject through which the approach is made is of primary importance and that the literature which is approached is only secondary.

The best teaching of literature, in my judgment, is done by teachers who are so moved by works of literature that they believe literature is the most important and exciting thing in the world except human beings. Their chief concern as teachers is to help students to read works of literature as they should be read. They do not need to approach the teaching of literature indirectly or to justify its existence; literature to them is an end in itself. Their chief concern is

to find time enough to read all they want to read.

College students learn from such teachers of literature; and I am inclined to believe that theirs is the only approach to the teaching of literature in college which is very effective. The indirect approach to the teaching of literature is as questionable as the indirect approach to the teaching of football. The way to teach football is to assume that the playing of football is a highly desirable end in itself, to encourage boys to play it, and to help them play it well. The way to teach literature is to assume that the reading of good novels, stories, poems, and plays is a desirable end in itself, to encourage students to find out what authors have to say, and to help them to do it well.

The teaching of literature is, like all arts, really very simple. It is very simple, that is, if the teacher is really excited, in a sober professional sort of way, of course, about the literature he wants students to read; if the works he wants the students to read are really relevant to their intellectual and spiritual needs and are, in De Quincey's phrase, the literature of power and not merely more information, true or false; and if he keeps his attention on helping the students to grasp the full meaning which the work of literature has to convey.

## Round Table

### AN EXPERIMENT IN THE SURVEY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

The neglect of American literature in colleges has been reiterated of late in newspapers and professional journals. Although it has been the custom in many colleges to require a course in the survey of English literature of all students, few colleges have required a course in American literature of their English majors. A largeness and freedom of spirit analogous to the great open spaces of our land breathes through much of our literature from Cooper, Hawthorne, Emerson, and Mark Twain to more familiar contemporary figures; but we seem sometimes cut off from the great English tradition which is our heritage as well as that of the British people. Perhaps Emerson's declaration of intellectual independence in "The American Scholar" has helped to build up this feeling of isolation. Still, it is a recognized fact that much of the altruism and individualism merging in our democratic ideals is rooted in the ideology of England.

It would seem natural, then, that young people growing up with pride in their native land should take a keener interest in the great figures of English literature if they are led to see the close connections between the growth of ideas and the literary developments in England and America. With such an assumption in mind, we have tried the experiment of introducing a few American figures among the familiar British authors usually studied in the second half of the survey.

Beginning with the eighteenth century, one must lean upon historical background in setting the stage for the popular periodical literature, the skilful use of satire, and the reliance on classical models. The study, then, of Pope and Swift, of their evident trust in

common sense, which pervades the thought of the period, prepares us for a refreshing figure from across the sea in the person of Benjamin Franklin. His homely wisdom may be less sparkling than the brilliance of his English contemporaries, but his satire is like theirs, pungent and telling, particularly in his "Rules for Reducing a Great Empire"; and the grace and dignity of his letters show an eighteenth-century *savoir faire* that might well win the respect of Dr. Johnson.

Following the study of the romantic movement, one may use Poe to show the reflection of romantic characteristics in America as well as the pseudoromantic Neo-Gothic type of fiction. For the latter, Irving or Hawthorne might do as well. But the study of "The Raven" may point to later as well as to earlier literature. Such a study might include not only the influence of English romanticism but also the incentive given to Rossetti to reverse in "The Blessed Damozel" the situation presented in Poe's poem.

In the Victorian period Emerson belongs naturally with Carlyle, his lifelong friend. Their agreements and disagreements bring out the essential nature of each. The author of "Culture and Anarchy" could not have believed with Thoreau that the whole meaning of life was to be found in Concord, but he would have recognized in the latter's essay, "Life without Principle," the evils in society which he had designated as Philistinism. And doubtless the scholar gypsy would have found solace in Walden. A late romantic, Whitman reiterates transcendental theories; and therefore linking the English romantics with Emerson and Thoreau belongs perhaps before Tennyson, Browning, and Rossetti, with whom the survey ends.

Five American figures in all would suffice to show in the survey close interrelations,

which were undoubtedly fostered by a great grievance of the time—the absence of international copyright. Certainly some great Americans might; in class discussion; take the place of English writers whom students would naturally read without special guidance. Addison, Steele, Lamb, Hazlitt, and Ruskin, for instance, were assigned this term for outside reading with good results in the short tests given to cover this material.

Our experiment is now continuing through the second term, and the assumption with which we started seems to us in some degree correct. Although my sections have been by no means exceptional in quality, I have rarely found classes more alert or responsive or more eager to do all and more than was required of them.

We plan to offer this type of survey in September as an elective to nonmajors, believing that our majors should get a more complete knowledge of American literature in a survey of that field and a more inclusive study of English literature in the general chronological course.

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### HARVEY: OR SANITY IN THE THEATER

In last October's issue of *College English* there appeared an analysis by Lillian H. Hornstein of the current play *Harvey* as "a study of insanity in the theater." Admirable as I usually find Mrs. Hornstein's work, on this occasion she and I look at a work of art from points of view diametrically opposite. To me it seems that the consummate artistry of Frank Fay in his characterization of Elwood Dowd presents not a study of decadence but a real answer for the tensions and distractions of modern life.

In a topsy-turvy world Elwood Dowd is that rare creature, a well-poised, sane man. He still believes in the simple virtues of kindness and honesty. When he finds the

forces of materialism too strong for him, he retreats behind a screen of fancy which bewilders the opposition. Like Hamlet, he is mad only "north north-west," but when the wind blows "from the south" he is as sane as any man. Dowd does have his convivial moments, but never on the stage; nor is Harvey, the white rabbit, ever presented in carnate form. "Charlie's Place" and Harvey's presence are utilized by Dowd in evolving a philosophy of life satisfactory to his kindly, humane spirit in a world which no longer resembles that in which he grew up. "I wrestled with reality for forty years," says Dowd, "and I won." The world of Elwood and Harvey—and of the rest of us today—would have seemed quite mad to our grandparents; and many of us, faced with the vicissitudes of black markets, inflation, and atomic bombs, are often impelled to try some uncharted path in pursuit of that serenity which we all crave. During the play, at least, Dowd is seen enjoying Harvey's company on such a path.

A glance at Elwood's associates will provide justification for him. His sister Veta, obsessed by nonessentials, is driven along by her unpleasant but forceful daughter, Myrtle Mae, whose one object in life is a husband. Embittered by having to reside in her uncle's house, she lacks any affection for her family. In the first scene of the play, after the pettiness of Myrtle Mae and the banalities of Veta, the appearance of Elwood sheds sunshine over the entire audience. Most admirable is the prescience and timing of Dowd's introduction of Harvey, which allows the spectators to relax in the benevolence of Dowd's smile as soon as Harvey is his only companion.

The episode at Chumley's Rest, a psychiatric sanitarium, is a fine bit of stage business. The nurse, the young assistant, and Wilson, "the strong-arm department," are all completely self-absorbed; as a result Veta—not Elwood—is treated as the patient after she has confessed, under the warm smile of Dr. Chumley, that she too has actually seen the white rabbit. Dr. Chum-

ley, overwhelmed at the discovery that they have treated the wrong patient, speeds up to town and to "Charlie's Place" after Dowd. Back at the sanitarium, in a scene of delicious whimsy, Dowd relates much more of the story about Harvey. At the close he recommends "Shock Formula 977" as a prescription, after which Harvey will disappear. The taxi driver who has brought Elwood out commiserates so feelingly with Veta over her brother's future as a "perfectly normal human being" that she recants and insists that she wants Elwood and Harvey left just as they are. And most of the audience listen with pleasure to Elwood's final line to Harvey: "Where have you been? I have been looking all over for you," as they watch them depart into freedom.

What is Elwood's prescription? In a conversation with Dr. Chumley he remarks: "My mother used to say to me, 'In this world, Elwood, you must be oh, oh, so smart or oh, so pleasant.' For years I was smart. I recommend pleasant." The contrast between the results of being "pleasant," as evidenced by Dowd, and those of being

"smart," as evidenced by the doctor or Myrtle Mae, can hardly be missed by the spectators. "It's our dreams which keep us going," says Veta in one of her inspired moments. "I wouldn't want to live if I thought it was all just eating and sleeping."

And so I cannot accept Mrs. Hornstein's conclusion: "To glamorize neuroses, psychoses . . . and to make them the subject of light laughter . . . indicate a moral shallowness and intellectual futility which our students should be taught to recognize as the first signs of decadence." Instead of warning students against the play, I should prefer to urge teachers to see it for the subtle illumination of life to be found in it. With Elwood's line still lingering in my ears, "I recommend pleasant. You may quote me," I remain convinced that it is no form of decadence to avoid the evils of reality if in so doing one achieves the wisdom and the kindness of spirit which characterize Elwood Dowd.

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## DESDEMONA

SISTER MARY JEREMY<sup>1</sup>

Old women do not know this piercing song  
Nor show such alabaster in their dying—  
It is the young who take their death of wrong.

Their elders mourn them the appointed day  
And in the sun resume their grisly chat  
Of heirloom ache and intricate decay.

But Death's a dancing angel with a crown  
And not the shake-toothed summoner they know;  
He calls his queens to music and renown  
And they will make a progress when they go.

<sup>1</sup> Rosary College, River Forest, Ill.



## Current English Forum

Conducted by

THE N.C.T.E. COMMITTEE ON CURRENT ENGLISH USAGE

### The Split Infinitive

IN SOME quarters the study of English grammar is made more difficult than need be by the continued observance of certain fetishes that no longer have any validity, if they ever had. Let us consider, for example, the dictum against the "split infinitive," as it is called. Generations of school children have been warned so vehemently against splitting an infinitive that the practice seems to some persons almost like one of the seven deadly sins. If you are one of those who have been trained to see a split infinitive, you must have many uncomfortable moments and probably find it necessary to write a number of letters pointing out those little demons which have occurred in the works of the best of writers since the beginning of the fourteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

In Old English, the infinitive with *to*, the prepositional infinitive (made up of the preposition *to* and the dative case of a verbal noun ending in *-enne* or *-anne*, as in *And begunnon pā tō wyrccenne*, "And they began then to work"), was not nearly so common as the simple infinitive ending in *-an*, as *Ðā ongan sēo abbudysse clyppan ond lufian pā Godes gyfe in pām men . . .*, "Then began the abbess to cherish and love the gift of God in the man". . . . According to Morgan Callaway, Jr., only 25.3 per cent of the infinitives used were prepositional infinitives.<sup>2</sup> Since that time the relative frequency of the in-

finitive with *to* and the simple infinitive has been reversed. Charles C. Fries, in the material he examined for present-day English, found only 18 per cent of the infinitives without *to* used.<sup>3</sup> With the spread of the word *to* into nearly all the uses of the infinitive has come the placing of other words between the *to* and the infinitive, so that the so-called "split infinitive" has become common in modern writing.

One cannot blame the split infinitive on hasty journalism, for among the users we list poets and prose writers, including Wyclif (who made possible the first English translation of the Bible in 1384), Sir Thomas Browne, Swift, Fanny Burney, Byron, Keats, Macaulay, Trollope, Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, Browning, and Matthew Arnold. Lists of writers using this construction may be found in T. R. Lounsbury,<sup>4</sup> J. Lesslie Hall,<sup>5</sup> H. Poutsma,<sup>6</sup> and George Oliver Curme.<sup>7</sup> Sterling A. Leonard, in *Current English Usage*, wrote: "The evidence in favor of the judiciously split infinitive is sufficiently clear to make it obvious that teachers who condemn it arbitrarily are

<sup>1</sup> *The Infinitive in Anglo-Saxon* (Pub. No. 169) (Washington: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1913), Appen. D. (Folder.)

<sup>2</sup> *American English Grammar* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1940), pp. 130-31.

<sup>3</sup> *Standard of Usage in English* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1908), pp. 240-68.

<sup>4</sup> *English Usage* (Chicago: Scott, Foresman & Co., 1917), pp. 266-75.

<sup>5</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 463-65.

<sup>6</sup> *Syntax* (Boston: D. C. Heath & Co., 1931), pp. 458-65 (Vol. III of Curme and Kurath, *A Grammar of the English Language*).

<sup>7</sup> See Otto Jespersen, *A Modern English Grammar*, Vol. IV, Part V: "Syntax" (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1940), p. 330; H. Poutsma, *A Grammar of Late Modern English*, Part I: "The Sentence" (2d ed.; Groningen: P. Noordhoff, 1928), p. 462; George Oliver Curme, "Origin and Force of the Split-Infinitive," *Modern Language Notes*, XXIX, No. 2 (February, 1914), 41-45.

wasting their time and that of their pupils."<sup>8</sup> In fact, no reputable authority on usage today will object to the separation of *to* from the infinitive.

It may be interesting to note influences which have doubtless contributed to the rise of separating the *to* from the infinitive. One is the use of *to* with two infinitives, the second of which has an adverb directly before it, as in *He has the ability to understand and fully sympathize with others* and *All that you have to do is to write and patiently wait for an answer*. Here *fully* and *patiently*, being placed before the second infinitive in each instance, come after the *to*.

A second contributing factor may be found in word order, one of the chief syntactical devices in Modern English whereby the modifying words are usually placed directly before the words they modify, as in *She successfully finished the book* or *She delighted in successfully finishing the book*. As a result there is a strong tendency to put the adverbial modifier of an infinitive immediately before the infinitive and after the *to*, as in "to fully express," "to completely alter," "to entirely reform," "to so act that," "to so present," "to seriously question," and "to either write or forget."

Then there are other split expressions, which have not gained the publicity of the split infinitive. In a sentence such as *He is as clever in his writing as his sister* one observes a split comparison. Often one sees a split subject and predicate, as in *He, instead of writing me, called in person*. Then there is

the split verb phrase, constantly used, to which there is no objection, such as *I have never heard him, If the desired result is ever reached, He will be highly recommended*. So, by analogy, one finds words placed between the *to* and the infinitive.

H. W. Fowler states that this usage is preferable to ambiguity or to artificiality.<sup>9</sup> For instance, in such a sentence as *Our purpose is further to cement the friendship between them*, it is not clear whether an additional purpose or an additional cementing is meant, whereas *to further cement* leaves no doubt in the mind. Again, such a statement as *When the record of this war comes dispassionately to be written, it will be found that*. On the other hand, *to be dispassionately written* seems natural and unaffected. Fowler favors a sense of discrimination based on the normal rhythm of the English sentence, for he feels that the distorting of a sentence in order to avoid a split infinitive is far more damaging to the person's literary pretensions than the actual lapse would be.<sup>10</sup>

The purpose of this article is not to advocate the splitting of infinitives but to show that this construction is sound, historically and syntactically, and is in common usage. The nonsplitting die-hards, however, need not feel any compulsion to use the split infinitive. They may still remodel their own sentences in order to avoid it.

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<sup>9</sup> *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), p. 560.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 558.

<sup>8</sup> (Inland Press, published for the National Council of Teachers of English, 1935), p. 124.

Maybe we're old-fashioned, but we like to see words spelled as they were when we went to school. Take that word, "alright," which keeps cropping up. If it's all right to spell it "alright," then let's follow through and make anything that's wrong "alwrong," and do it "everyday" and "alday." Personally, we think the whole idea is "alwet." And there is "anyplace." If it's "alright" to go "anyplace," how explain it when there's "noplace" to go?—Adapted by H. T. EATON, Brockton (Massachusetts) High School, from an editorial in the *Manchester Guardian*.

## Report and Summary

### About Literature

THE SUMMER'S YIELD OF CRITICAL essays has been richer than for a long time past. One of the most useful of these is Harry Levin's "Literature as an Institution" in the spring *Accent*. This is, in effect, a history of the changing conceptions of the function of the literary historian from Taine to the present day. Actually it is an argument for modern critics to regard literature as an institution, to dispose of the dichotomy between form and substance, to integrate social and formal criticism, and, above all, to remember that criticism should be the "science of art."

In discussing the contribution of Taine, Levin re-evaluates him as a literary historian who, though in the vanguard of scientific positivism and who, though he formulated a sociological approach to literature based on the social forces behind literature, nevertheless was himself conditioned by romanticism. The inevitable result is that in his *History of English Literature*, Taine did not consistently practice his own theory but discussed many writers very largely as individualists. Some of the social critics who succeeded him, Georg Brandes, V. L. Parrington, and Granville Hicks, extended Taine's method to politics. Parrington became a Jeffersonian critic, Hicks a Marxist. Taine's school, in contradistinction to the romanticists, conceived of art as a collective expression of society, but its adherents made no allowances for permutations of form. Rather they "industrialized his process for extracting the contents of books." Levin concludes that the whole modern movement of realism, technically considered, is an endeavor to emancipate literature from the sway of conventions and that that is why literary historians, under the in-

fluence of realism, have slighted literary form. But literature, he maintains, has always been an institution. "Like other institutions, the church or the law, it cherishes a unique phase of human experience and controls a special body of precedents and devices; it intends to incorporate a self-perpetuating discipline, while responding to the main currents of each succeeding period; it is continually accessible to all the impulses of life at large, but it must translate them into its own terms and adapt them to its peculiar forms." Once we have grasped this fact, Levin feels, "we begin to perceive how art may belong to society and yet be autonomous within its own limits, and are no longer puzzled by the apparent polarity of social and formal criticism."

AN ACCOUNT OF THE PRACTICAL and material effects of the war upon British books and authors is especially interesting to read in connection with Levin's essay. Vera Brittain, in "Back to 'Normal' in Britain" (*Saturday Review of Literature*, Aug. 3), makes no attempt at literary criticism. She merely relates the social facts and points to some of the results. The dictatorship of the paper shortage has produced a lag of at least eighteen months between the delivery of a manuscript and its publication, which has cut out altogether the topical book; publishers allocate paper to authors whose sales are certain and eliminate the young, unknown, and experimental authors, so very few new voices have been heard; the shortage has put a pressure on British authors to write short books, to develop an impressionistic and more economical style; it has produced a virtual ban on translations of eminent foreign authors; many publications of

established classics as well as new books are out of print; elderly authors suffer because no royalties are coming in on back publications; very few reviews or literary criticisms are being written for newspapers and magazines because most newspapers have been cut to two pages and magazines cut correspondingly; there has come a new change in relationship between author and publisher. Now the publisher, not the public, determines the number and size of the editions. Miss Brittain hopes that by another two or three years the status and sale of books will once again be decided upon merit combined with the infinite variety of public taste. Meanwhile, the standing of English letters in international literature obviously is being affected and weakened.

Another social force upon the use of language is suggested in an amusing editorial concerning the broadcasting idiom of Dizzy Dean, which appears in the same issue of the *Review*. It seems that Dean's use of the American language in describing the St. Louis Cardinal games has so disturbed certain teachers of English in Missouri that they have petitioned the F.C.C. to ban him from the air for setting a bad example to young, impressionable baseball fans who are hard enough to teach English to, anyway.

THE "FIRST OF THE NEW CRITICS" was Edgar Allan Poe, according to George Snell, writing in the *Quarterly Review of Literature* (Vol. II, No. 4. Why can't the editors use dates?). Snell points out that Poe discovered a critical method which had, as its only previous champion, Dryden; that is "the explication of literary work, line by line, sentence by sentence, not even overlooking punctuation." With Poe, "textual" criticism as we know it today was born in America. Snell traces the development of Poe's theories of art along with his art. He points out how Poe influenced the symbolist poets, foreshadowed Proust and Joyce, how his theories on unity and brevity still have considerable effect on the modern short story, and how today his method of criticism is noticeably affecting modern critical practices.

TWO ESSAYS WHICH SUPPLEMENT each other and are worth reading together are William Van O'Connor's "The Poet's Private Reality" in the *Quarterly Review of Literature* (Vol. III, No. 1) and Stephen Spender's "The Making of a Poem" in the summer *Partisan Review*. O'Connor points out that a major concern of T. S. Eliot and other contemporary writers has been the depersonalization of man. At present, however, we have in some modern poetry "a recognition of the need for devotion to the private person." He gives Spender as an example "of devotion to great personality." Spender's own highly personal essay in part bears out O'Connor's thesis. This recognition of the individual, as O'Connor points out, has developed in opposition to forces that have served to preclude the development of the whole human being. Despite the preoccupation of sociologists and state planners with people in the mass, we still have a great need for recognizing, understanding, and appreciating individual persons. He illustrates from Spender, George Barker, Edith Sitwell, Karl Shapiro, and others to show how they exhibit profound respect for the individual. From their work he concludes that "if it is true that in poetry one may discover currents not yet discernible in public life the recent trend in poetry may serve to hearten us with its promise of the reintegration of personality."

"The Making of a Poem," by Stephen Spender, presents a very clear picture of how at least one well-known modern poet goes about his work. In so doing, Spender necessarily has to explicate the concerns of poets generally, such matters as concentration, inspiration, memory, faith, and song. The first problem of creative writing, he writes, is essentially one of concentration, but there are different kinds of concentration and different poets concentrate in different ways. Spender makes the distinction between two types of concentration, the immediate and the complete. Some poets write immediately works which, when written, scarcely need revision. Others write their poems by stages, feeling their way from rough draft to rough draft until eventually



the final form is achieved. Spender says of himself that he is scarcely capable of immediate concentration. He "suffers from an excess of ideas," so he sets down as many ideas as possible in notebooks, develops some, and discards others. To illustrate his method, he cites one example from his notebook and shows the progress of the various rough drafts which finally resulted in a finished poem. Concerning inspiration, Spender says, "Everything is work in poetry except inspiration"; "Inspiration is the beginning of a poem and it is also its final goal. It is the first idea which drops into the poet's mind and it is the final idea which he at last achieves in words. In between the start and the winning post there is the hard race, the sweat and toil."

"Memory" is the natural gift of the poet genius. The poet may forget telephone numbers and the number of his own house, but the poet "above all else, is a person who never forgets certain sense impressions which he has experienced and which he can re-live again and again as tho with all their original freshness." The poet must also have faith, and poetic faith Spender defines as "a mystique of vocation, a faith in his own truth, combined with his own devotion to his task." There is much more, and not only does Spender define but he illustrates what these all mean to him and how he has worked them out. This should be an extremely helpful essay for all teachers of literature, prose as well as poetry, and of composition as well. It is simply and clearly enough written (bereft of all the jargon of some professional aesthetic criticism) so that the teacher can direct the student to it for personal reading, and the substance is so firm that it should stimulate good class discussion.

ANOTHER POET WHOSE METHODS are discussed at some length in the spring *Accent* is William Butler Yeats, whom Morton Seiden psychoanalyzes. According to Seiden, neither Edmund Wilson, who holds that Yeats is a symbolist in the tradition of such French writers as Verlaine and Baudelaire, nor William York Tindall, who treats Yeats

almost entirely as a transcendentalist in the long line of European mystics from Jean Paul Richter to Christopher Isherwood, really gets at the real meanings of Yeats's poetry. Seiden's thesis is that Yeats constantly used his own dreams and the dream symbol as the chief sources of his lyric and narrative verse. He analyzes a short poem, "Cap and Bells," and a long one, "Ossian," to the point that both express an Oedipus complex, which Seiden maintains is substantiated by Yeats's *Autobiography*. On the psychoanalytical level, the poetry, Seiden says, is a study "in Yeats' sense of psychotic loss due to an exaggerated Oedipus complex and imagined castration. On the conscious level, it is an expression of the artist's sense of impotence in the midst of our highly industrialized, and somewhat sterile, twentieth century." Seiden makes out a good case, but I'm not sure Yeats would agree, consciously.

FOR THOSE INTERESTED IN IRISH literature, "Irish Regional Novelists of the Early Nineteenth Century," by B. G. MacCarthy, appears in two instalments in the spring and summer numbers of the *Dublin Magazine*. The novels of Maria Edgeworth, John and Michael Banim, Gerald Griffin, and William Carleton are all discussed in some detail. It is shown that the moral didacticism of Maria crippled the full development of her powers, that Griffin and Carleton also wished to teach, to use fiction to serve one or the other of the two divisions in Ireland. With the Banims, and to a lesser degree with Griffin, it was the object to reveal the oppression under which the native population suffered. Carleton veered according to his partisanship. The novel was molded for the most part in the hands of the privileged and middle classes, though Carleton, the greatest of the writers under discussion, was the son of a flax hackler. This study is important because it clearly shows how these regional novelists contributed a growing point for the future development of those English-speaking writers who could link the present with the country's Gaelic past. In other words, they were the forerunners, and

pretty good ones, too, of all those writers whom we associate with the Irish Renaissance. That good poetry and prose are still being written in Ireland is evident in the files of the *Dublin Magazine*, for all through the war years the magazine has appeared punctually and maintained its high literary standards, one of the few magazines in Europe which has been able to do it. On its pages, young, new voices as well as older ones have been freely raised.

OTHER CRITICAL ESSAYS TO WHICH attention should be drawn are Edwin Berry

Burgum's "Thomas Wolfe's Discovery of America" in the summer *Virginia Quarterly Review* and Franz Schoenberger's discovery of Thomas Wolfe in the *New York Times Book Review* (Aug. 4). Burgum tells how Wolfe found himself, and Schoenberger, who was editor of the pre-Nazi magazine, *Simplicissimus*, sees Wolfe's genius afresh and as an eloquent voice in the New World. J. B. Priestley writes on "Shaw as Social Critic" in the *Saturday Review of Literature* (July 27), and Harold Watts re-evaluates Jules Romains and *Men of Good Will* in the spring *Rocky Mountain Review*.

### *About the NCTE*

WE HAVE LOST BY DEATH TWO OF our most distinguished members:

TUCKER BROOKE will be mourned by many more than Yale men. He was a genial colleague, an accomplished scholar, and an inspiring teacher of scholars. Marlowe and Shakespeare were the subjects of his special knowledge, and he wrote about them masterfully as he talked about them brilliantly. Of the man, we shall remember most affectionately his wit and his engaging modesty.

ARTHUR EDWARD CHRISTY was prepared by his boyhood in China to be a student of comparative cultures. He translated Chinese poetry into English, he wrote his dissertation on the Oriental literature known to Emerson and his school, and he edited *The Asian Legacy* for the East and West Society. His enthusiasms led to his energetic service to the National Council as organizer and chairman of the committee on comparative literature. He made for it a survey of the teaching of the subject in American colleges. He edited the first three volumes of *The Comparative Literature News-Letter*; and he planned and organized the forthcoming *Guide to Comparative Literature*. Called to the University of Illinois as first

professor of American literature, he served only one year before his sudden death at the early age of forty-six. He was a tireless worker, a man of sterling honesty and loyalty.

ELDON C. HILL, SECRETARY, reports to us the meeting of the English section of the Ohio College Association and Allied Societies last spring. The section voted to affiliate with the National Council of Teachers of English and instructed the incoming officers to choose the director to represent the Ohio group in the NCTE Board of Directors. The officers of this new NCTE affiliate for 1946-47 are James F. Fullington, chairman, department of English, Ohio State University, president; Eldon C. Hill, associate professor of English, Miami University, secretary. The program included a paper by Dr. Warren Taylor, Oberlin, on "Literature and General Education," a report by Professor Arthur M. Coon, Akron University, on the findings of his investigation into the relation of freshman English to English teaching loads in Ohio college and universities, and the report of a committee which studied the ways of improving the certification of teachers of English in the public schools of Ohio. This

committee was appointed in 1945 by Dr. Karl O. Thompson of the Case School of Applied Science, president of the English section. It consisted of Dr. E. F. Amy, Ohio Wesleyan University, chairman; Dr. Eri J. Shumaker, Denison University; and Dr. F. L. Utley, Ohio State University. The group worked in the spirit not of fault-finding but of fact-finding. Amply aware that the problems of certification are greatly complicated during the present shortage of teachers, the committee, nevertheless, believes that its recommendations may be of increasing utility in years to come. The whole import of the findings is to foster a greater degree of co-operation between the state authorities in public education, the high-school teachers, and the college teachers of English. In endeavoring to find the reasons for the poor preparation in English of so many college freshmen, the committee studied the reports of the State Board of Education, examined the records of bureaus of appointments, and compiled information on high-school curriculums. The committee's conclusions were that "too many teachers are certified in Ohio to teach English," too many who have been certified have majored in some subject other than English, and high-school students are not given sufficient training in writing and revising themes.

The recommendations of the committee were divided into two groups, the first being directed toward the improvement of teaching and guidance in college and the second carrying suggestions to high-school teachers and administrators as well as to state authorities in public education. The recommendations follow:

### I

1. Recognizing that the entering freshman is better prepared to pursue his college courses if he has been well trained in communications, we should strive to impress upon students who expect to teach English the importance of adequate preparation to teach reading, writing, and speaking. The tradi-

tional freshman course is not enough; it should be supplemented by further training in the prospective teacher's junior or senior year.

2. In view of the decline of study of foreign languages, we recommend that teachers of English should acquire a knowledge of the general characteristics of language, of the history of our own language, and of trends in modern usage.
3. The prospective teacher should be guided in the study of literature so that he will have a wide acquaintance with the classics, including the old as well as the new, and foreign literature in translation as well as American and English writings.

### II

1. Without presuming to dictate to the high schools, we should like to suggest that the senior year emphasize writing and re-writing, and a review of grammar and usage. High school administrators should adjust teachers' loads so as to permit time for a considerable amount of drill in these phases of our subject.
2. As we return more nearly to normal life and the supply of teachers again equals or exceeds the demand, the requirement of an M.A. for high school teachers will undoubtedly again be made. We commend such a movement but insist that, except for prospective administrators, the emphasis upon such an M.A. should be placed on the content subjects rather than on courses in Education.
3. Ultimately, we should like to see the teaching profession placed on the level of that of law, medicine, and other professions which certify only through examinations.
4. We recommend that the English Section Committee on Correlation of High School and College English Curricula be resurrected. Perhaps this step can await the completion of the study being made by a Committee of Public School and University Teachers under the auspices of the National Council of Teachers of English, though a state committee might well have a contribution of its own to make.

The English section voted approval of the report.

## *NCTE Convention in Atlantic City*

**T**HE National Council of Teachers of English will hold its first unrestricted convention in five years in Atlantic City, November 28-30. President Helene W. Hartley has provided, with the assistance of Second Vice-President H. A. Dominovich, a full and stirring program.

### CONVENTION THEME: ENGLISH FOR THESE TIMES

#### GENERAL PLAN

Two All-Convention Sessions—presenting issues and points of view

Sixteen Group Conferences—considering the contribution of English instruction and research to specific problems of our times, with emphasis upon actual classroom practice, including some demonstrations

Three Section Programs—representing elementary, secondary, and college English

Special-group luncheons on Friday

Three Literary Occasions—presenting distinguished authors and critics

#### PROGRAM SAMPLINGS

##### *Thursday evening and Friday morning General Sessions:*

English for These Times—Some Issues and Implications, Helene W. Hartley

The Contribution of Language Study, Charles C. Fries

Teaching Literature Today, Theodore Morrison

Maximum Essentials in Composition, Porter Perrin

Critical Thinking through Instruction in English, Harold A. Anderson

The Curriculum Commission in English: A Progress Report, Dora V. Smith

#### FRIDAY-AFTERNOON GROUP MEETINGS

*Topics:* For One World; For One Nation; Understanding Our American Heritage; Improving Communication through Writing; Improving Communication through Speech; Improving Communication through Reading; Language and Communication; Fostering Individuality through Speech and Writing; Guiding Pupils to Moral Resources in Literature; Exploring Values in Drama; Studying Periodicals and Television; Studying Motion Pictures; English in the Education of Adults; Preparing Teachers; Current Research in the Teaching of English; Does Reading Tire You?

*Some of the Speakers and Chairmen:* Willard Thorp, Maxwell Nurnberg, Irvin C. Poley, Mark Neville, John J. De Boer, Wilfred Eberhart, Harry Warfel, Thomas C. Pollock, Esther M. Raushenbush, William S. Gray, Edgar Dale, Belle McKenzie, Lennox Grey, George W. Sullivan, Alain Locke, Ida A. Jewett, Leonard Carmichael,



Charlemae Rollins, E. Sculley Bradley, George Robert Carlsen, Wesley Wiksell, Harlen M. Adams, Emmett A. Betts, W. Wilbur Hatfield, Angela M. Broening, John C. Gerber, Marion Sheridan, Lou LaBrant.

## SATURDAY SECTION MEETINGS

Elementary Section in charge of Dora V. Smith

High-School Section in charge of Irvin C. Poley

College Section in charge of Roy P. Basler

## LITERARY OCCASIONS

*Friday evening:* John Mason Brown, dramatist and critic  
Second speaker to be announced

*Friday luncheon:* Authors of books for children

*Saturday luncheon:* Howard Fast, novelist and biographer  
Edward R. Murrow, analyst of world affairs

The program in full will appear in the November number of the *English Journal*.

## HOTELS

Meetings, registration, and exhibits will be in the municipal Convention Hall. There will be no headquarters hotel.

Room reservations should be made as early as possible. Hotel accommodations will be taxed to the utmost, and more than three hundred reservations had been made before July 31. Hotels will not accept applications by personal letter but insist upon use of a special form, which can be obtained upon postcard request from the Council office, 211 West Sixty-eighth Street, Chicago 21. (Postal regulations prohibit the printing of the form in this magazine.) The June *English Journal*, page 358, shows location and rates of most of the hotels available, but its directions for making reservations are in error.

## COUNCIL OFFICERS, 1946

*President,* HELENE W. HARTLEY, Syracuse University

*First Vice-President,* WARD H. GREEN, 303 Board of Education Building, Tulsa 1

*Second Vice-President,* HARRY A. DOMINOVICH, Germantown Friends School, Philadelphia 44

*Secretary-Treasurer,* W. WILBUR HATFIELD, 211 West Sixty-eighth Street, Chicago 21

*Executive Committee:*

The OFFICERS of the Council, and

(President, 1945) HAROLD A. ANDERSON, University of Chicago

(President, 1944) ANGELA M. BROENING, Forest Park High School, Baltimore 7

(President, 1943) MAX J. HERZBERG, Weequahic High School, Newark 8

(Chairman, High-School Section) IRVIN C. POLEY, Germantown Friends School, Philadelphia 44

(Chairman, Elementary Section) DORA V. SMITH, University of Minnesota

(Chairman, College Section) ROY P. BASLER, University of Arkansas

# *National Council of Teachers of English*

## *Proposed Amendments to the Constitution*

The following proposed amendments to the Constitution of the National Council of Teachers of English will come before the Annual Business Meeting (individual members) in Atlantic City on November 29. At the request of the Executive Committee they were prepared during the Minneapolis Convention by Helene W. Hartley and Max J. Herzberg.

W. WILBUR HATFIELD  
*Secretary*

1. That Article VI, paragraph one, under "Board of Directors," be amended by striking out the last six words: "chosen by the Board of Directors."

*Reason for amendment:* Section chairmen are now *ex officio* members of the Executive Committee.

2. That Article VI, paragraph three ("A"), line two, be amended by inserting "and with dues fully paid" after "Council."

*Reason for amendment:* The right of an affiliate group to representation on the Board of Directors should be predicated upon *current* status as an affiliate.

3. That Article VI, paragraph three ("A"), be further amended by substituting for the last sentence the following: "Such directors shall serve from the opening of one annual meeting to the opening of the next annual meeting, unless in the meantime the affiliation of their association with the Council has lapsed."

*Reason for amendment:* The present statement does not define the terminal points for the term of "one year." Varying and confused practice has resulted.

4. That Article VI, paragraph four ("B"), be amended by adding to the second sentence, following the words "term of three years," the following: "beginning at the opening of the first annual meeting and continuing to the opening of the fourth annual meeting after their election."

*Reason for amendment:* Defining the time at which the term of three years begins and terminates will avoid confusion and varying practice.

5. That Article VI, paragraph five ("C"), be amended by adding to the last sentence the phrase "at the end of the annual meeting."

*Reason for amendment:* To avoid confusion as to which directors function during any annual meeting.

6. That Article VI, paragraph seven, be amended by adding to the paragraph the following sentence: "In case of any emergency of a sort that makes an annual meeting seem to the Executive Committee impossible or impracticable, the President of the Council shall poll the Board of Directors by mail asking their approval of the omission of such a meeting."

*Reason for amendment:* Article IX, "Meetings of the Council," paragraph 3, does not allocate authority to cancel an Annual Meeting. The proposed amendment gives this authority to the Board of Directors.

7. That Article VI under "Board of Directors," be further amended by adding after paragraph seven a new paragraph as follows: "In case a regularly constituted director of an affiliated club is unable to attend an annual meeting during his term of office, an alternate may be sent in his place providing that the alternate presents the proper credentials and fulfills all other requirements for a full accredited director from his affiliated group. The alternate does not, however, take over the unexpired term of office of the regularly constituted delegate unless specifically selected to do so by regular constitutional process."

*Reason for amendment:* The present constitution makes no provision for alternates.

## Books

### In Brief Review

[Mention under this head does not preclude review elsewhere.]

#### FOR THE GENERAL READER

*Then and Now.* By SOMERSET MAUGHAM. Doubleday. \$2.50.

A brilliant comedy of love and intrigue set in the days of Machiavelli and the Borgias. Machiavelli was sent to Cesare Borgia to represent the Florentine republic; there he sought to seduce Aurelia, the beautiful wife of one of Borgia's friends. Maugham has used this rich material with his usual astuteness.

*A World To Win.* By UPTON SINCLAIR. Viking. \$3.00.

Seventh volume of the "World's End Series." The opening words, "Lanny Budd kept thinking"—midsummer of 1940—will indicate to readers acquainted with Lanny just what they may expect.

*Road to Calvary.* By ALEXEI TOLSTOY. Knopf. Pp. 885. \$4.50.

Small print; 885 pages. A gigantic trilogy. The first part, "The Sisters," describes the Petrograd intelligentsia just before and during the first World War and the events of 1917; the second part, "1918," the early civil war; and the last part covers the final civil war years. Tolstoy, related to Leo Tolstoy, lived to see this work win the Stalin Prize and achieve international reputation.

*New Directions. 9.* Edited by CLARA SEYMOUR ST. JOHN. New Directions.

Stories, poems, and essays by forty authors, many of them advance-guard writers here and abroad. Includes a lengthy analysis by James T. Farrell of the commercialization of American publishing.

*Drums under the Windows.* By SEAN O'CASEY. Macmillan. Pp. 430. \$4.50.

This third volume of the author's autobiographical series presents memories of his mature years and carries him to the first World War. He gives us a brilliant record of the background which helped form his character. Good print, very readable, and not too long.

*The Adventures of Wesley Jackson.* By WILLIAM SAROYAN. Harcourt. Pp. 285. \$2.75.

"My name is Wesley Jackson, I'm nineteen years old and my favorite song is *Valencia*." There are many other characters, but largely the story is con-

cerned with Wesley's (Saroayan's?) war experiences at home and abroad. Tragic, humorous, ugly—not Saroayan at his best.

*Bernard Clare.* By JAMES T. FARRELL. Vanguard. Pp. 367. \$2.75.

Farrell's many novels have had Chicago for a background. Bernard Clare, whose ambition was to become a writer, leaves Chicago and seeks fame in New York. This is the story of his struggles. Fame he has not yet won, but he refuses to admit defeat.

*A Negro's Faith in America.* By SPENCER LOGAN. Macmillan. Pp. 88. \$1.75.

A successful Negro businessman insists that economic opportunity, rather than social equality, is the chief desire of the majority of colored people, and that it should be the first objective of all reformers working for interracial amity. He admits that a light complexion, indicating a larger admixture of Caucasian blood, was at one time a social advantage among Negroes, but says that this prejudice is passing. He thinks the southern Negro leaders wiser than those in the North. There is in the book enough resentment of discrimination to show the author's honesty.

*All the King's Men.* By ROBERT PENN WARREN. Harcourt. Pp. 464. \$3.00.

By the author of *Night Rider*, *At Heaven's Gate*, and many poems. A novel of political intrigue and human nature as illustrated by the ruthless man-of-the-people type thirsting for power. Three men and a woman are involved. Southern aristocrats are not lacking.

*The Portable Faulkner.* Selected and edited by MALCOLM COWLEY. Viking. Pp. 756. \$2.00.

Selections from four volumes of stories and complete episodes from five novels.

*The Portable Woolcott.* Selected by JOSEPH HENNESSEY. Viking. Pp. 735. \$2.00.

*While Rome Burns and Long, Long Ago* complete; twenty-five selected sketches and letters.

*Hawthorne's Short Stories.* Edited by NEWTON ARVIN. Knopf. Pp. 422. \$3.00.

Twenty-nine short stories, both familiar and little known. An excellent three-page Introduction by the editor.

*The Great White Hills of New Hampshire.* By ERNEST POOLE. Doubleday. \$3.00.

"The Place—People—Customs—Traditions—Folklore." Illustrated. The Pulitzer Prize winner has lived for thirty-five years in his White Mountain home. One of his anecdotes worth considering, although it does not lighten the load of the teacher, is that of the schoolmaster who said, "If you try any funny business, I'll whale the lot of you, and if that don't help I'll follow you home and lick the folks that trained you."

*The Playwright as Thinker: A Study of Drama in Modern Times.* By ERIC BENTLEY. Reynal. Pp. 382. \$3.00.

Mr. Bentley disapproves of Broadway and Hollywood. He believes we should look to the theater for moral and aesthetic values. He evaluates the best of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century dramatists, including Shaw, Ibsen, Wagner, Wilde, Pirandello, and others. Foreword and notes.

*The Fever Bark Tree: The Pageant of Quinine.* By M. L. DURAN-REYNALS. Doubleday. Pp. 275. \$2.75.

A fascinating study of the history of quinine. Alexander the Great died of malaria in 336 B.C. Had quinine saved his life, the course of history might have been changed. First discovered in the Andes, its cultivation has extended to other countries, particularly to Guatemala, India, and Java.

*Restless India.* By LAWRENCE K. ROSINGER. Holt. Pp. 113. \$2.00.

A "Headline Series" book. Its purpose is to give an accurate and factual account of the forces at work in India today. The author has had several years' experience in India and is well qualified to write on its affairs.

*Alexander of Macedon: The Journey to World's End.* By HAROLD LAMB. Doubleday. Pp. 402. \$3.50.

By the author of *March of the Barbarians*, *Genghis-Khan*, etc. Lamb presents his demigod—the Macedonian prince who before he was thirty tried to form a federation of world states—as hero, conqueror, aesthete, scholar, and very human and real person.

*Psychology for the Millions.* By A. P. SPERLING. Frederick Fell. Pp. 397. \$3.00.

Illustrations from all walks of life. "What makes them tick": John L. Lewis, Petrillo, Dubinsky, Stalin, Walter Winchell, Charlie Chaplin, Jimmie Durante, and John Barrymore. Fear, anxieties, phobias—why are they? What causes and how shall we treat neuroses? The use of nontechnical language makes the explanation of laboratory methods easily understood by the casual reader.

*The Mahatma and the World.* By KRISHMALAL SCHRIDHARANI. Duell, Sloan. Pp. 247. \$3.50.

By the author of *My India, My America*. A remarkable study of Gandhi's life and the part he has played in India. "Without understanding Mahatma," says the author, "one cannot understand India." No man since Buddha has won the hearts of the Indians so completely and symbolized their ethos so poignantly.

*Conditions of Civilized Living.* By ROBERT ULICH. Dutton. Pp. 251. \$3.75.

In his Introduction the author says, "This book represents a bold attempt to answer the question as to the conditions under which civilization is possible." He traces the pattern of civilization back through the history of mankind. "How," he asks, "can man turn modern civilization away from its course of self-destruction to ideals and purposes of progress?" A frank and simple call to all men to meet responsibilities.

*Germany in Defeat.* By PERCY KNAUTH. Knopf. Pp. 233. \$2.75.

As bureau chief of the Paris office of *Time*, Mr. Knauth went to Germany in early 1945. He made an intensive study of the present life in Germany and writes a remorseless description of defeated Germany. It should be widely read.

*Geoffrey Chaucer of England.* By MARCHETTE CHUTE. Dutton. Pp. 347. \$3.75.

Miss Chute writes delightfully a very entertaining biography of Chaucer, with a background of fourteenth-century English life. She analyzes and interprets several of his works, including *Canterbury Tales*. Pleasant reading. Foreword: "A really good writer is always a modern writer, whatever his century."

*Oscar Wilde: His Life and Wit.* By HESKETH PEARSON. Harper. Pp. 345. \$3.75.

In a fine Prologue the author says he mentioned his plan to write a life of Wilde to Bernard Shaw and Shaw said, "Don't do it." "I answered Shaw's objections by saying that my intention was to take Wilde out of the fog of pathology into the light of comedy, to restore the true perspective of his career, to revive the conversationalist not the convict."

*The Land of the English People.* By ALICIA STREET. Lippincott. \$2.00.

"Portraits of the Nations" series. Maps and photographs. History and legends of the charm of the countryside and the nation's people. The past, present, and future are treated skilfully.

*Red Morning.* By RUBY FRAZIER FREY. Putnam. Pp. 380. \$3.00.

A historical novel of unusual brilliance. Jane McClain, daughter of aristocratic Virginians, would



seek a career today; in pioneer days she sought freedom from family restraint by marrying an English officer bound for western Ohio. Her turbulent life is pictured with a background of French and Indian wars.

*Lustre in the Sky.* By COUNTESS WALDECK. Doubleday. Pp. 434. \$2.75.

A historical novel with all the pomp and pageantry of political intrigue to be found in a peace congress in the days of Talleyrand. The diplomatic Talleyrand found time in the midst of history-making for a very tender romance.

*A House in the Uplands.* By ERSKINE CALDWELL. Duell. Pp. 238. \$2.50.

A dramatic story of the decline of southern aristocracy, with the Negroes and tenant farmers in the background. A gripping study of human frailty.

*Ivy Gripp'd the Steps and Other Stories.* By ELIZABETH BOWEN. Knopf. Pp. 233. \$2.50.

Twelve stories dealing with the spiritual violence of the war. In the ruined homes of England personality persists. Delicate, brilliant, subtle.

*Brewsie and Willie.* By GERTRUDE STEIN. Random. Pp. 114. \$2.00.

Gertrude Stein has died since this book was published. Brewsie and Willie represent the many G.I.'s whom Miss Stein met in the occupation of France. From the uninhibited talks of G.I.'s she draws certain conclusions. These conversations are related by Miss Stein in readable English.

*Wake of the Red Witch.* By GARLAND ROARK. Little, Brown. Pp. 434. \$2.75.

A Literary Guild selection for April which remains exciting to readers of romantic adventure. Set in the Dutch East Indies, it has a Conrad-Stevenson touch.

*The Fire of the Lord.* By NORMAN NICHOLSON. Dutton. Pp. 256. \$2.50.

Set in an English village, with simple, frugal people in whose natures there is a conflict between religion, carnality, and love of the countryside.

*States of Grace.* By FRANCIS STEEGMULLER. Reynal. Pp. 214. \$2.50.

A postwar satire, very clever, of an assorted group of people, good and bad, including some Americans, who meet in Egypt.

*Homecoming.* By JOSEPH WECHSBERG. Knopf. Pp. 118. \$1.50.

By the author of *Looking for a Bluebird*. An Americanized Czechoslovakian visited his home town in the Russian zone of occupation. This is the story of what he found in May, 1945.

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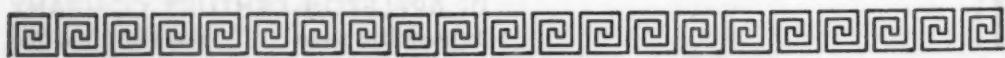
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